

BRIARPATCH

Volume 30, Number 7

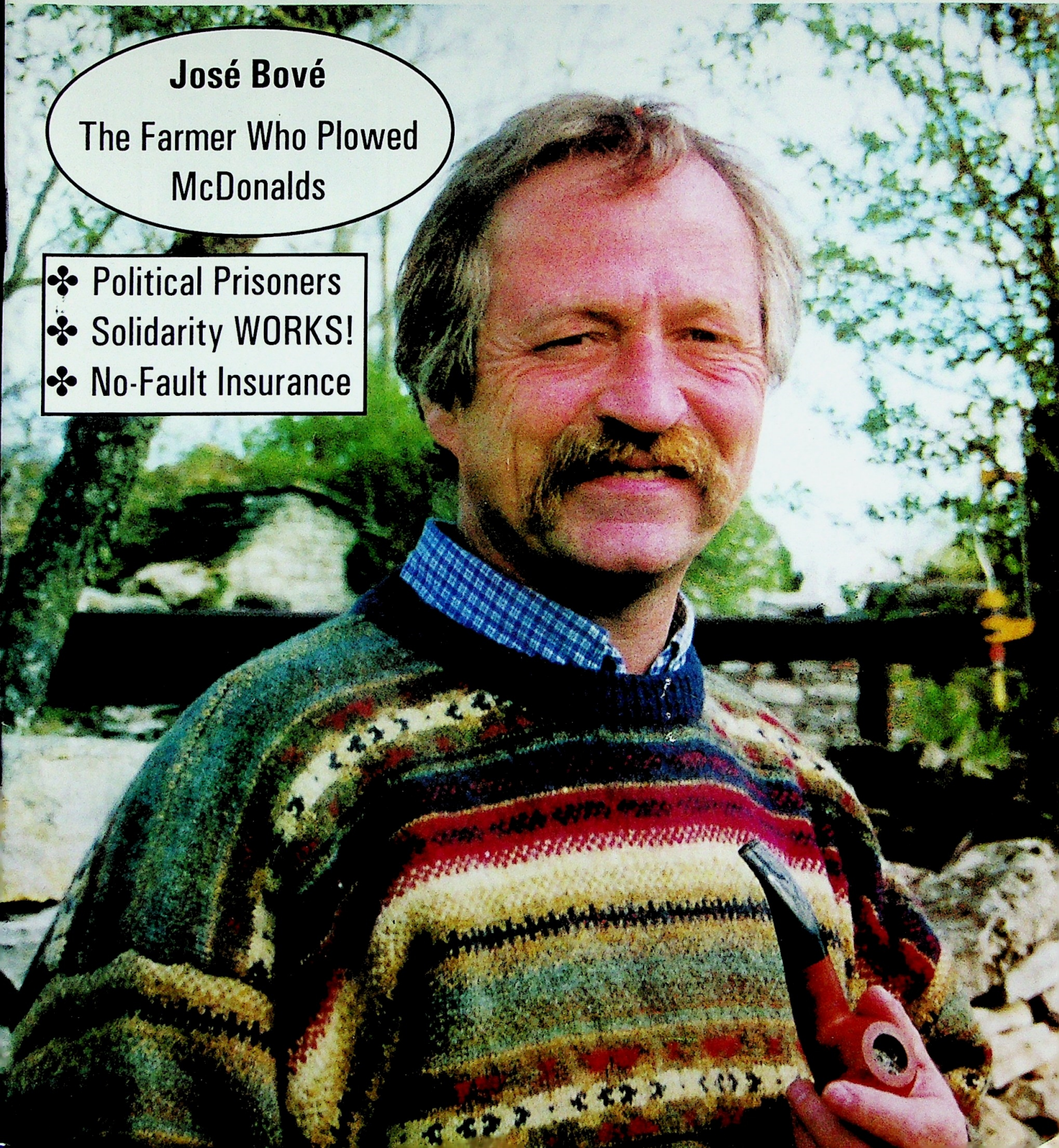
September 2001

\$3.00

José Bové

The Farmer Who Plowed
McDonalds

- ♣ Political Prisoners
- ♣ Solidarity WORKS!
- ♣ No-Fault Insurance



RESISTING GLOBAL MILITARISM

A Conference at the University of Victoria

Sept. 27 - 29th

Opening Keynote Speech, *The Moral Economy and the Global Commons* by Rt. Rev. Bill Phipps, Past-Moderator of the United Church of Canada, is on Thursday the 27th at 7:30 PM. Phipps has recently returned from the Sudan where he saw the effects of decades of civil war and the results of oil development by international companies, including Talisman Energy of Canada.

Friday Sept. 28th at 7:30 PM hear a panel on the *Ballistic Missile Defense Plans of the American Military* with: Svend Robinson, MP; David Morgan, Veterans Against Nuclear Arms; Paris Ann of Bombs Away.

Saturday Sept. 29th features panels with John Price, Canada Asia Pacific Resource Network; Sharmeen Khan, UVic Women's Centre; Terry Wolfwood, VIPIRG and Barnard-Boecker Centre Foundation; Cecilia Diocson, Phillipine Women's Centre, Vancouver; Steve Staples, Council of Canadians and International Network on Disarmament and Globalization; Jaggi Singh, La CLAC and anti-APEC activist.

There will also be workshops, discussion groups, art and entertainment. The conference is organized by VIPIRG (Vancouver Island Public Interest Research Group), Barnard-Boecker Centre Foundation, Vancouver International Development Education Assoc. and Canada-Asia Pacific Resource Network.

For more information check the website at www.vipirg.ca, send an e-mail to conference@vipirg.ca or phone 250-472-4558.

ART RAFFLE TICKETS

A big thank you to all of our subscribers who sold tickets this year. We extended the draw date because tickets were arriving at the last minute and we still received a few after we did the draw. If you still haven't mailed yours, don't worry... drop them in the mail and the tickets will go into our next annual draw.

AGM

The Briarpatch Annual General Meeting will be held on Sunday, September 23rd at St. Andrew's College (Main Lounge), 1121 College Dr., Saskatoon. The theme of the event is Food and Globalization and will start at 3 PM with speakers and workshops. This will be followed at 5 PM by a potluck supper, socializing, a raffle for an Elaine Briere photograph and the meeting. All members, subscribers and friends are welcome. There is no cost to attend but donations will be accepted to help off-set expenses.



AGAINST THE WALL

Planning an educational or a conference on globalization? Copies of the June 2001 issue about the Summit of the Americas in Quebec City are available for \$3.00 each.

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

The union representing oil and gas workers in Algeria intervened in the on-going dispute between the Communications, Energy, and Paperworkers Union of Canada (CEP) and Petro-Canada, voicing its solidarity with the striking Petro-Canada workers in Ontario and urging the company's chief executive officer to immediately settle the strike.

The Algerian union "remains, rest assured, committed to all forms of solidarity action with the CEP in its struggle to stop the take-backs from the Ontario workers," Mohammed Bedreddine, General Secretary of the National Federation of Oil, Gas, and Chemical Workers (FNTPGC) wrote in a letter to Brian Payne, president of the CEP.

Petro-Canada, which operates in the oilfields of Tamadanet in southern Algeria, has announced plans to expand in that country. In a letter sent to Petro-Canada's President and Chief Executive Officer, Ronald Brenneman, Bedreddine made it clear that Petro-Canada's dealings with the CEP would have an impact on the FNTPGC's approach to Petro-Canada's operations in Algeria. "This is our union method, as you will find out in the future in the oilfields in Algeria that Petro-Canada plans to develop," he wrote.

"We are grateful for the assistance of our Algerian brothers and sisters," said CEP President Brian Payne. "A globalized oil and gas industry requires a globalized labour movement and we hope Petro-Canada will realize there are consequences, even beyond Canada's borders, for its anti-union actions in Ontario."

Briarpatch is Saskatchewan's independent alternative newsmagazine committed to building a socialist democratic society. We provide a forum for disadvantaged peoples and support progressive movements working to change unjust structures and build a genuine political and economic democracy. We support peace, equality, democracy, social justice, Aboriginal self-determination, and the protection of the environment. We oppose the oppression of people on the basis of nation, class, race, gender, ability, and sexual orientation.

September 2001

www.briarpatchmagazine.com
briarpatch.mag@sk.sympatico.ca

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**They can Run,
but they can't Hide!.....3**

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A look at a very significant threat to life and limb that continues year after year with little effort made to curb it.

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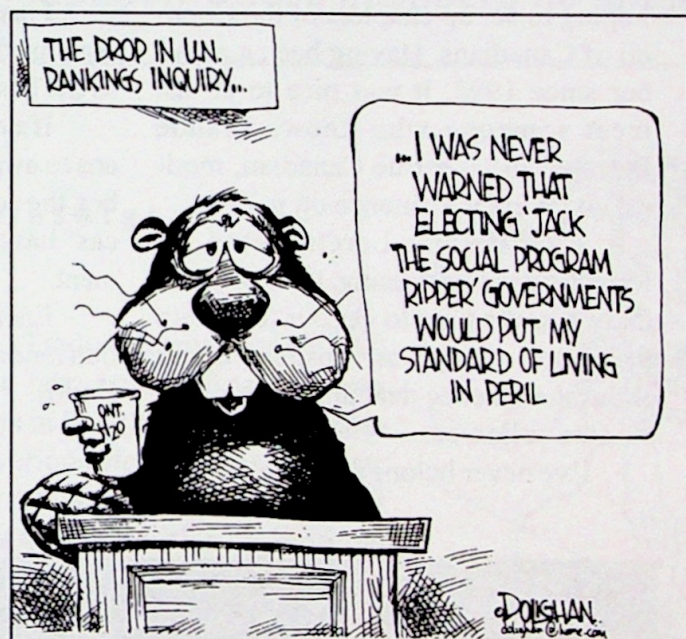
A graduating class engages in a struggle to have a graduation speaker who happens to be a political prisoner.

by an Anonymous Student

**Canada's Dirty
Laundry.....5**

For seven years we held the title of "the world's best place to live" but we've recently been down-graded to third place by the United Nations. What's rarely mentioned is that we are consistently in 11th place on the Human Poverty Index.

by Pam Kapoor



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We could be in for a GMO plague.

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There's a man at the door... what do you do?

by Richard Stringham

Briarpatch magazine was founded in 1973 and is published ten times a year by Briarpatch Inc., an independent non-profit organization. Many of the articles and photographs in Briarpatch are contributed by volunteers. Deadline for the receipt of articles is 45 days preceding publication. Unsolicited contributions will not be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Opinions expressed in the magazine are not necessarily those of the Briarpatch board of directors or staff. Articles may be reproduced provided proper credits are given. Briarpatch is a member of the Canadian Magazine Publishers Association and the staff are members of RWDSU Local 568. The Briarpatch office is at Huston House, 2138 McIntyre Street, Regina, SK S4P 2R7. Phone (306) 525-2949. One year subscription: \$24.61. Unions & institutions: \$35.31.



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COVER

Theresa Wolfwood

Dear Briarpatch,

I have previewed your website and am very pleased to see that there still exist organizations such as yours who work so hard in providing a more social place for us all to live. I thank you for your efforts and wish you continued success. I also recognize and appreciate the lightheartedness you have integrated within your efforts to help protect our interests. I will speak of your efforts with others.

George Choboter
Buchanan, SK

Dear Briarpatch,

Last Thursday several of my friends, my husband and I had the pleasure of meeting Victoria Gibb and Loretta Gerlach who were in Alberta hoping to set up chapters of the Council of Canadians. Having been a member since 1992, it was nice to at last meet someone who knows Maude Barlow. She is a true Canadian, modest and a great influence on many.

Victoria and Loretta were informative and interesting. It's a pity that there's never time to get our teeth into the issues, though my husband asked about the Quebec deal and a good discussion followed.

I've never belonged to a union and

wonder about the pros and cons of belonging to a union. Would someone write to *Briarpatch* and explain please? Have always been a person who believes in fairness and people's rights.

The June issue of *Briarpatch* every Canadian should read. It is a real waker-upper. It's hard to believe that what happened in Quebec City happened in Canada.

I have given away most of my *Briarpatch* magazines and I believe one or two people have got a sub to it. My husband and I live in the country and are as busy as we want to be. We are seniors.

Edna Satre
Westrose, AB

Dear Briarpatch,

I just received my June 2001 issue, *Against the Wall*, which probably ranks as the best *Briarpatch* I've ever read.

If ever there was a time for Canadians to awaken from their apathetic slumber, the so-called "Summit of the Americas" has to have been a galvanizing element.

Enclosed is my cheque for subscription renewal in perpetuity or thereabouts. Kudos.

Mendelson Joe
Emsdale, ON



"The life blood of democracy is activism; we can vote out the liars in favour of common sense but we must be active." Mendelson Joe

THEY CAN RUN, BUT THEY CAN'T HIDE!

The World Trade Organization is meeting in the tiny, isolated country of Qatar. This is what their "democracy" looks like:

They are ruled by Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani whose power is absolute. He consults with the Cabinet, other members of the ruling Al-Thani family, representatives of the larger merchant families and with the Advisory Council whose members he appoints.

by Anna Dashtgard

The last time the World Trade Organization (WTO) attempted to launch a new round of negotiations it triggered the protests in Seattle and mass demonstrations have taken place at various global sites since then. The upcoming WTO Round this November 9-13 in Qatar is an important moment to show opposition right in our own communities. The WTO cannot get away with meeting in secrecy in a tiny, undemocratic nation that very few have heard of and even fewer can afford to travel to!

What is the WTO?

With 141 members, the WTO is probably the most powerful trade body in the world. Often referred to as a form of "world government," it has the same legal status as the United Nations but with greater enforcement powers. It was formed in 1995, replacing the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).

The WTO can strike down any member country's laws if they present "barriers to trade." So far, when disputes come up over laws protecting people's health, the environment, labour rights or national industries, corporate interests win 90 percent of the time. Decisions are made by appointed trade bureaucrats behind closed doors. No surprise that many critics claim that the WTO is the biggest threat to democracy on the planet.



What's on the table at Qatar?

The WTO is holding the first round of negotiations since it was formed in 1995, to make up for the round that failed in Seattle. The WTO administers over 20 different trade agreements, including the GATS (General Agreement on Trade in Services), TRIPS (Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights), TRIMs (Trade Related Investment Measures) and AoA (Agreement on Agriculture).

One of the big pushes right now is the expansion of the GATS. Corporations are aiming to privatize our public services and programs including healthcare, education,

museums, libraries, social assistance, energy, prisons, public broadcasting and environmental protection services. The only service sector fully exempt is the military. The Canadian government claims that some of these sectors are protected, but in reality the wording in the GATS to protect our public services is so weak it is meaningless.

The push for the New Round is coming from lobby groups of service corporations based in the U.S.A., the E.U. and Japan. Many of these corporations joined forces in the "World Services Congress", a three-day conference held in 1999 sponsored by Coca-Cola, Fed-Ex, UPS and others, specifically to "provide private sector guidance to governments as they prepare for the WTO's Services 2000 negotiations."

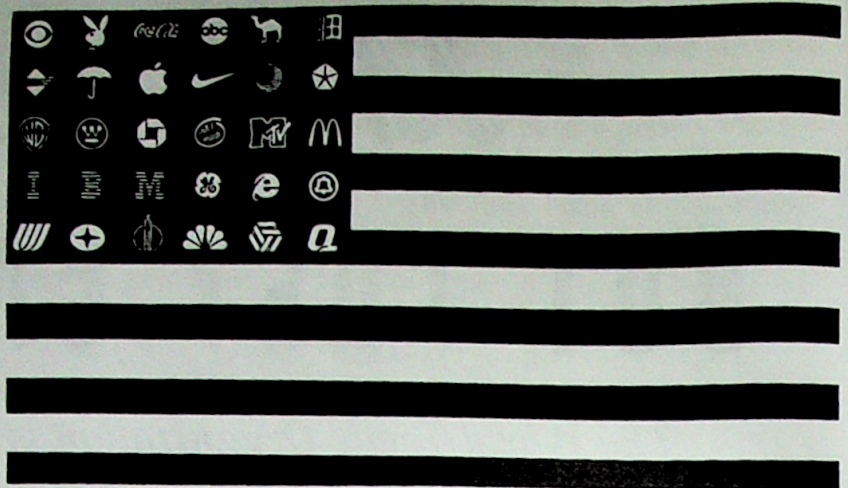
After meeting in Africa recently, a number of developing nations stated unequivocally that they are not ready to get into a new round of trade negotiations. However, the U.S.A. and the E.U. (following their corporate services lobby groups) are leaning heavily on developing nations such as India, Malaysia and Pakistan to come on board.



What's happening in Canada and around the world?

There is a Citizen's Summit being organized in Beirut, Lebanon. It's the first time the middle east has organized or played host around these issues. Greenpeace, José Bové (in France) and a number of Indian fisherpeople have been sharing strategies on getting to Qatar by boat! Over 20 countries are planning action campaigns during the Qatar round. The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions declared November 9th as an International Day of Action for workers around the world!

In Canada, the Common Front on the WTO (CFWTO), a coalition of over 60 national and regional organizations,



is launching a national campaign, "WTO: They Can Run, But They Can't Hide," building up to a Nov. 9th Day of Action. There will be two "Quebec to Qatar" caravans traveling across the country with public forums along route. Central to the campaign will be a "travel permit" which will deny permission for the Canadian government to go to Qatar unless certain demands are met. Campaign materials will include a WTO video, the travel permit, lobby kit, corporate profile stickers and card game.

Quebec to Qatar Caravans

The "Quebec to Qatar" cross-country caravans will be launched on Oct. 2nd from Regina, Saskatchewan and St. Johns, Newfoundland to arrive in Ottawa on Nov. 9th. Communities are being asked to organize activities for the caravan tour such as rallies, workshops, town hall meetings, public forums, MP visits, outside video screenings, tour of key corporations and critical mass rides. The caravan will include national leaders, local activists and speakers from Latin America, the Middle East and Africa.

How can I get involved?

- ➔ Help organize for the "Quebec to Qatar" Cross-country caravan to come to your community. To indicate interest in a caravan stop email: caravan@wtoaction.org.
- ➔ Sign the "Qatar Travel Permit" and help organize others to sign it. Distribute and use other WTO materials.
- ➔ Start organizing an event or action in your community. Suggestions include a public debate or forum, actions targeting Liberal MPs' offices, action at key corporate headquarters, stock-exchanges or local businesses with services being taken over by corporations.
- ➔ Encourage others to contact their MPs asking why the Canadian government supports a New Round of negotiations at the WTO.
- ➔ Link to the CFWTO website and sign onto the CFWTO listserve for campaign updates at www.wtoaction.org/cfwto.

Western Caravan

Oct. 2 Regina, Saskatchewan (with Public Forum)
Oct. 2-5 Northern-Mid Saskatchewan
Oct. 5-8 Northern-Mid Alberta
Oct. 8-18 British Columbia
Oct. 18-20: Southern Alberta
Oct. 21-23: Southern Saskatchewan
Oct. 24-27: Manitoba
Oct. 28-Nov. 9: Northern Ontario

Eastern Caravan

Oct. 2 St. Johns, Newfoundland (with Public Forum)
Oct. 4-9: Newfoundland
Oct. 10-15: Nova Scotia
Oct. 16-22: New Brunswick and P.E.I.
Oct. 23-31: Quebec
Nov. 2- Nov. 9: Southern Ontario

Our Goal:

Actions around the world this November 8-13th will send a message to world leaders and their corporate friends that no matter how far they go to meet, or how strongly they barricade themselves up, they cannot quell public opposition to their agenda.

They can run, but they can't hide!

Anna Dashtgard is organizer for the Common Front on the WTO. She has been active for years in the movement against corporate-led globalization.

For more information on the CFWTO campaign, email: cfwto@sympatico.ca or call: (416) 532-3986

Canada's Dirty Laundry

by Pam Kapoor

The dust has somewhat settled since the release in July of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Human Development Index. The more prominent news item has been Canada's fall from grace, dropping to 3rd place from its cozy top standing. Our seven year run as the world's "best place to live" has provided endless self-congratulatory sound bites for our Prime Minister and exhaustive back-patting for the federal government. The UN's HDI ranks 174 countries based on four criteria: life expectancy, adult literacy, school enrolment and economic prosperity.

Canada's repeat performance as #11 on the UN's Human Poverty Index, a much more effective and telling ranking, is the deep dark family secret the fed's would rather we not discuss in public. Our dirty laundry (the shameful state of poverty in Canada) is finally gaining international exposure, much to Chrétien's annoyance.

Why the low ranking? Fifteen years of astonishing inaction could have something to do with it: no serious measure has been undertaken by the Canadian government in that time to close the inequality gap in this country. And while the UN report is telling, issues of sexism or racism are not adequately reflected in the analysis, nor are questions pertaining to labour rights or treatment of Native peoples. Were these integrated into a more sophisticated review of our performance on poverty, Canada would squirm under the unpleasant examination.

In the wake of yet another round of international trade discussions in Québec City, our PM has assumed the role

of poverty watchdog among international players, publicly waxing about the need to reduce global poverty, despite Canada's own dark record in that domain.

In the face of increased corporate profits, massive budget surpluses, and a projected 15 billion dollar surplus this year, there is no excuse for the Chrétien Liberals to avoid putting their budget where their rhetoric is.

We call on the federal government to:

- Introduce legislation confirming the unconditional right for all people in Canada to receive financial assistance from governments when in need.
- Include social condition in the Canadian Human Rights Act so that people are not discriminated against based on social condition.
- Amend the Employment Insurance program to improve benefit levels for the unemployed.
- Heed recommendations from NAPO and partner organizations to implement a concrete action plan to eliminate homelessness, hunger, and all manifestations of poverty.

The not-so-best kept family secret is common knowledge now. So instead of shaking hands with the world's corporate elite, Chrétien should shake up the House of Commons to solve the inequality equation in this country once and for all.

Pam Kapoor is the Assistant Director of the National Anti-Poverty Organization (NAPO). www.napo-onap.ca

Contamination from Secret Test Sites

by Sharon Rempel

Please take a minute of your life to consider the impact that genetically engineered (GE) field test sites and registered GE crop varieties could have on your food supply - and that of every generation that follows.

For 14 years, one-third of my life, I have looked after a collection of old varieties of wheat in the public domain. I share the seed with people who are interested in growing the old wheats. This year 26 organic farmers are growing the varieties and will carefully save the seed so it can be grown next year. Farmers have been saving their own seed since agriculture began about 10,000 years ago. This practice, not always seen as valuable, is really a right of any grower.

This year there are about 50 secret field test sites for GE wheats. This is the third year of GE wheat testing in Canada. The site locations are considered a business secret by Agriculture Canada, Monsanto and other companies who have invested time and money into getting the seed to the field. But what about the business interests of farmers and the national wheat export interests? The secrecy makes it very difficult (if not impossible) for a farmer, a living gene bank curator like myself or even our national gene bank people in Saskatoon to maintain our seeds with 100 percent confidence that the seed will not be exposed to GE pollen. Birds, insects, wind, water and soil can carry pollen great distances.

Past experiences have shown that science is not infallible. Remember thalidomide? DDT? Tobacco? Freon and other CFCs? And now Firestone tires and Starlink Corn and GE canola? Scientists and business often jump into things too quickly and the long term repercussions of their ideas turn out to be very harmful and not reversible. Remember the falsified pesticide registrations in the U.S.A. in the 1960s and '70s? Is GE registration data next? Profit, greed and the hope of securing fame from the "new and improved" drive people to unethical science.

We hear daily about GE canola and corn causing contamination problems. Once seed is contaminated, there is no going back. And we know that the science around GE is changing rapidly, not always for the better. If a farmer doesn't know where GE is growing and can't make a personal decision not to grow near that crop, then the integrity of their seed and crop is questionable.

We used to believe we could go back to a gene bank for fresh seed, but there is great global concern that the pristine collections already face low level GE contamination. We used to believe we could go back to the countries where the seed originates but GE is moving into these countries. If our gene bank collections are contaminated, then we have run out of options. If the GE projects and experiments turn out to be the worst case scenario, shouldn't we have a back up with clean seed banks? This is a very realistic and urgent concern, as we

are in our growing and pollinating season in North America.

Some countries have banned GE crops and put a moratorium on GE crop testing. This can happen quickly if there is interest from the public. We should have a choice about GE organisms in our food. I am worried about my old wheats; centuries of wisdom in the seed, a crop that is sacred in so many cultures and a symbol of our food supply.

Please learn more about the issue and ask that political change happen quickly to protect the integrity of all our seeds. Stand up for the seed in Canada and globally: act soon and demand political changes that will protect our food and seeds from genetic engineering.

Sharon Rempel studied Agriculture (B.Sc.) and Conservation (MA) and has been working with plant breeders, Heritage Wheat Project, The Garden Institute of Alberta, Seeds of Diversity Canada and the Alberta Organic Association.

More information can be found at this website:
<http://members.home.net/oldwheat>

Guilty??!!

On March 29th a Canadian judge dealt a crushing blow to farmers' rights by ruling that Percy Schmeiser, a third generation Saskatchewan farmer, must pay Monsanto (the world's largest biotechnology corporation) thousands of dollars for violating the corporation's monopoly patent on genetically engineered (GE) canola seed.

Under Canadian patent law it is illegal for farmers to re-use patented seed, or to grow Monsanto's GE seed without signing a licensing agreement. The ruling against Schmeiser establishes an even more dangerous precedent because it means that farmers can be forced to pay royalties on GE seeds found on their land.

Percy Schmeiser did not buy Monsanto's patented seed, nor did he obtain the seed illegally. Pollen from genetically engineered canola blew onto his land from neighbouring farms. Shortly thereafter, Monsanto's "gene police" invaded his farm and took seed samples. Percy Schmeiser was a victim of genetic pollution and courageously decided to fight back and speak out against bio-serfdom. He has filed a counter-suit against Monsanto.

Source: Rural Advancement Foundation International (RAFI). Website: www.rafi.org

You Don't Speak For Me

*Farmers can lose more than the shirts off their backs!
Now they've lost their voice.*

by Joyce Neufeld

The release of the last provincial budget had the Agriculture Producers Association of Saskatchewan (APAS) front and center as spokesperson for Saskatchewan farmers. Just how did APAS become my spokesperson?

First off, rural municipality councils appointed a delegate to represent them at the information meeting. These appointed persons of the participating RM's, then appointed or elected directors in each of six divisions in Saskatchewan. If I am correct, it was these directors who appointed or elected the chairperson. To my knowledge, none of the directors ever held a meeting of their ratepayers to discuss these appointments or the policies they would promote. Only after ratepayer outrage was heard did some RM's consent to a vote. Others arbitrarily made the decision for their taxpayers.

Comparisons:

Manitoba's Keystone Agriculture Producers (KAP) is funded by a check-off on grains. This check-off however is refundable. KAP has 12 districts and their directors and policies are developed at district meetings by the general membership.

Alberta's Wild Rose Agriculture Producers (WRAP) is a voluntary membership organization. WRAP has nine board members elected by the general membership who also develop their policies. Their executive is then elected by the directors.

The National Farmers Union (NFU) is a National organization. It is a direct farmer-membership and participation organization. Farmers create the policy at the local, district, provincial and national level. It has a voluntary, farm family membership and has a Women's President and Youth Presidents who sit on the National Executive along with the National President, to ensure it remains a farm family organization. These officials are all elected at the national convention.

APAS, on the other hand does not have farmers as members, but rather the Rural Municipalities are the members. Individual farmers, while forced to fund the organization cannot develop policy, cannot revoke their funding, nor can they even channel their 10 cents per acre of general revenue tax monies towards the farm organization they feel best represents them. Since APAS's funding is based on acres, rather than individual farmers, policy is not geared towards keeping the maximum number of farmers on the land.

In a letter to the editor of *The Leader Post*, Christine Whitaker, a councilor for the RM of South Qu'Appelle states, "Membership in APAS is not compulsory. It is not even open to individual producers. Membership is open only to rural municipalities, at a fee of 10 cents per acre of agricultural land within their jurisdiction. Currently, approximately one-third of the RMs in the province have either paid, or pledged to pay, into the organization. Some have taken the fee out of general tax revenue; others have imposed the 10-cents-per-acre levy on individual farmers."

Of course, we farmers are so naive that we don't realize the imposed levy or the general tax revenue comes out of our pockets.

Joyce Neufeld is a member of the National Farmers Union.



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DROP IN SOON!

VETERANS OF THE STRUGGLE

by Garnet Dishaw



photo: Garnet Dishaw & Don Jedlic

On-to-Ottawa Trek veterans (left to right) Elof Kellner, Rudy Fedorowich and Harry Linsley unveil a plaque in the Scarth Street Mall telling the story of the Trek

In the 1930s millionaire Tory prime minister R. B. Bennett established labour camps in remote and wilderness areas of northern Ontario and B.C. to get unemployed men out of the cities and beyond the reach of radical groups. Because there was no unemployment insurance or social assistance available at that time to single jobless men, tens of thousands of Canadian workmen were forced into these "relief camps."

The camps offered surplus army clothes and food, heavy physical labour, no recreation, no right to vote in elections, no Workers' Compensation coverage, flea-infested bunkhouses and wages of 20 cents per day. The camp inmates responded to this oppressive treatment by forming the Relief Camp Workers Union (RCWU) and fighting for real jobs with real wages and an integration back into normal society. The RCWU was affiliated with the militant Communist-led Workers Unity League, the labour federation that fought some of the biggest battles with bosses and cops during the Great Depression.

In early 1935 the RCWU called a strike to force better conditions out of the Bennett government. RCWU members in Camps across western Canada downed their tools and many headed for Vancouver where they staged huge demonstrations for the next two months. When these protests achieved little, the RCWU membership came up with the idea of taking their demands directly to the federal government in what came to be called the On-to-Ottawa Trek.

Over 1000 strikers left the Vancouver rail yards on June 3, 1935 on the boxcars of CPR freight trains. They headed east through the mountains going hungry at some stops and sleeping in parks and sports grounds. In Calgary the Trekkers had to occupy the relief office to get food. All along the route unemployed workers joined the traveling protest. By the time the Trek reached Regina on June 14th it was 2,000 strong and growing daily in numbers and confidence.

R.B. Bennett was more than a little concerned. He ordered the RCMP to halt the Trek in Regina. Any Trekker

trying to leave the city for the east was arrested. For two weeks Regina citizens and the provincial government fed the Trekkers and housed them at the Exhibition Grounds.

On July 1, 1935 the RCMP and city police arrested the Trek leaders at a large public meeting igniting the Regina Riot, that saw a series of pitched battles rage through the streets of downtown Regina for several hours. One policeman was killed and hundred of Trekkers and supporters were shot, beaten and badly injured. The Trekkers decided to disperse in the week following the Regina Riot. They returned to their home areas looking as though they had been in a fight, but they were not beaten.

Historians generally agree that the Trek made it impossible for any government to ignore real job creation measures or mistreat workers in subsequent economic downturns. After the Trek, politicians also brought in social assistance for single people and unemployment insurance coverage.

To mark this milestone event in Canadian history the federal government placed a bronze plaque at the north end of the Scarth Street Mall in Regina. The plaque was unveiled by three Trekkers at a well attended ceremony June 7. The three Trekkers were Elof Kellner from Burnaby B.C. who was responsible for discipline and security on the 1935 Trek, Harry Linsley from Saskatoon, who went on to a long career with the United Packinghouse Workers union after the Depression, and Rudy Fedorowich who had distinguished service in the Canadian army in World War II and in peace-keeping exercises. Rudy is now retired in Regina. All three Trek veterans are in their mid-90s and as radical and unrepentant as ever.

Garnet Dishaw is the director of research and communication with the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour. He is a strong admirer of the Trekkers.

165 People Killed! 7,562 Injured!
Over \$100,000,000 in Property Damage!
Provincial Government Helpless!
Expects Same Carnage Next Year!

Sounds like a major disaster hit the province, doesn't it?
A force so powerful that even government is powerless to
protect its citizens from injury and death.
Welcome to the world of the automobile.

by Dan Parrott

These statistics come from the 1997 Saskatchewan Traffic Accident Facts yearbook. According to this source there is nothing peculiar about these numbers. Every year Saskatchewan motor vehicle collisions routinely kill scores and injure thousands of people.

While the mainstream media portrays these collisions as accidents, the constant recurrence of injury, death and property damage suggests that in reality they are simply the predictable costs of running an automobile-based transportation system. For years Saskatchewan's Department of Highways emphasized the routine nature of the death and injuries by noting how many people were killed and injured in motor vehicle collisions every day and hour. For example their 1986 annual report noted

that there was a traffic "accident" every 16 minutes, 24 people injured every day, and one person killed every 36 hours.

These numbers haven't changed much over the years. For instance in 1990 there was one "accident" every 16 minutes, 22 injured people per day, and one person killed every 57 hours. More recently SGI ran an advertising campaign whose main theme was the number of Saskatchewan



people being regularly hurt and killed in motor vehicle collisions. The net effect is to show the automobile system for what it is: a human meat grinder, killing and maiming people every hour of every day, year in and year out.

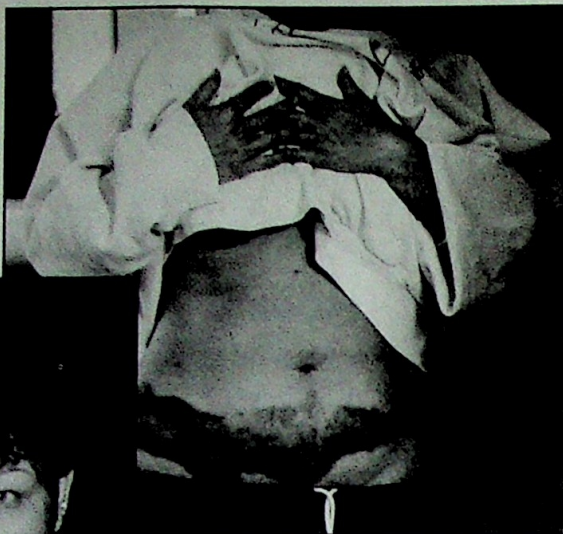
Human Cost of the Auto Industry

This human cost represents a significant and necessary annual subsidy to the automotive industry. An automobile-based transportation system simply can not operate if it has to guarantee the safety of every person using it. Nor can the industry operate if it had to fully compensate those people killed or maimed by its products. Full compensation to automobile victims would represent a substantial cost. This cost can be calculated using one of two methods. Using the Minimum Cost Method motor vehicle fatalities, injuries and property damage in 1997 cost Saskatchewan people and the provincial economy \$199,594,050.00 (reported in 1993 dollars). Using the Human Capital Approach these same 1997 fatalities, injuries and property damage cost \$734,720,000.00.

Again and again, each and every year Saskatchewan residents and the provincial economy absorb these kinds of costs on behalf of the multi-national corporations making up the industry. In fact since 1962 the automotive industry has cost Saskatchewan people approximately \$29.6 billion in 1993 dollars using the Human Capital Approach. This does not include the hundreds of millions annually spent on road infrastructure, which is yet another subsidy to this industry.

Provincial Response

Provincial governments have done little but tinker with this awful, costly transportation system. In 1995 Saskatchewan Highways and Transportation declared its intention to reduce motor vehicle fatalities and injuries in the prov-



Her seatbelt saved her life in this crash but it didn't prevent the pain and frustration caused by the serious injuries that went mis-diagnosed for four years. Cindy Mayer was cut off insurance benefits because "she had a bad attitude and the pain was in her head." Now she has had to hire a lawyer to try to get her benefits reinstated even though she's had surgery for herniated disks.

ince by 25 percent by the year 2000. Instead of acknowledging the inevitable danger inherent in this system and designing safer transportation alternatives, the department proposed little more than safety education for drivers. And the result of this initiative? In 1995 motor vehicles killed 157 and injured 7471. In 1996 motor vehicles killed 135 and injured 6829. In 1997 motor vehicles killed 164 and injured 7606; 1998 had 148 killed and 7212 injured; 1999 had 186 dead and 7995 injured.

It does not appear that Saskatchewan Highways will reach their year 2000 target using this "Driver Ed" approach. Worse, not only do the

human and financial costs of motor vehicle collisions appear to be increasing each year, but the provincial government's response has been to cap compensation to victims.

Protecting Corporate Profits: Enter No-Fault Insurance

In 1994 the province passed legislation enacting a new no-fault insurance scheme for Saskatchewan. Prior to this Saskatchewan had a hybrid automobile insurance system which provided basic benefits to all collision victims on a no-fault basis and unrestricted access to the tort system for innocent victims to recover compensation for losses not covered under the first party plan.

The new no-fault automobile insurance scheme was implemented in Saskatchewan in January 1995. This scheme virtually eliminated the right of an injured individual to seek compensation from the responsible driver for losses that are not covered under the no-fault plan.

Furthermore the wording of section 102 of the *Automobile Accident Insurance Act* appears to protect corporations who should be sued especially if they are clearly at fault. For example, if Toyota negligently designs and manufactures a car that injures or kills a driver, the Act protects

Toyota from a lawsuit to compensate the survivors. Or if a municipal corporation negligently fails to repair a road, and this causes property damage or bodily injury or death, the municipality can not be sued by the survivors.

In the words of Ralph Nader: "They (corporations and individuals) are virtually immune from lawsuits. And guess what? You have also immunized General Motors and Toyota, and other auto companies and repair companies from liability, unless you're rich and can tweak them for a few bucks - about \$50,000. Nobody discusses this at all. They must have been clinking champagne glasses in Detroit, figuring, 'Boy, they have trouble with the English Language in Saskatchewan. They swept us right in with the immunity crowd.'"

No-Fault has already had effects on injured victims' ability to recover compensation due to corporate and

we can't sue them, multi-nationals can sue us individually and even collectively, as they take governments to court for passing laws affecting their profits.

Unaccountable, inherently dangerous, polluting and a significant contributor to global climate change - maybe it's time to permanently park these

death-traps or at least repeal some of the laws protecting them at our expense.

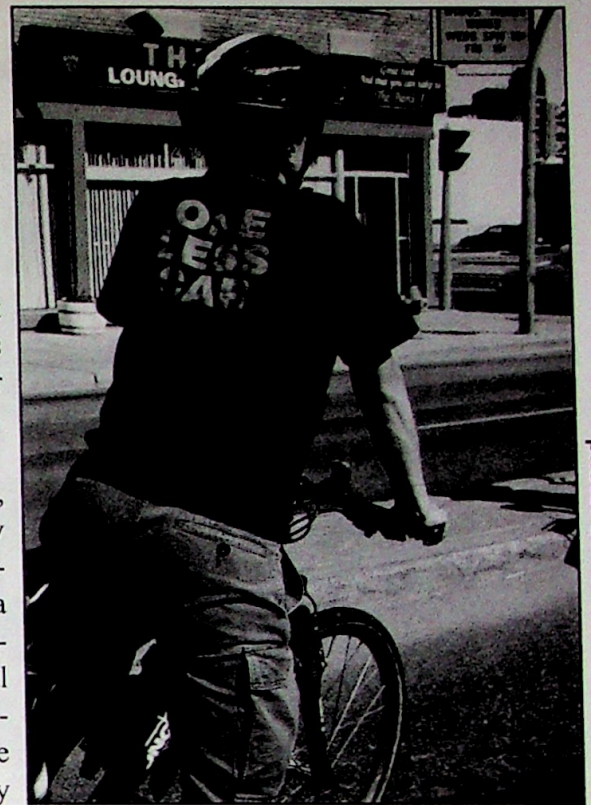


photo: Debra Brin



individual negligence. According to the Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix*, a 23 year old man tried to sue General Motors after the seat belt in his 1993 Pontiac Sunbird broke and allowed him to fall out of the vehicle during a mishap. The man suffered head injuries, scars on his face, and aches and pains. The judge threw the case out saying that no-fault insurance protects GM.

The victim said that he was not impressed that GM will not have to answer to his accusations. "I survived, but maybe the next time somebody won't." The newspaper also stated that General Motors may not be the first to benefit from protection from no fault, and cited examples of where parties accused of negligence causing "accidents" were protected.

Conclusion

As a result, injured parties and survivors can only recover compensation available under the no-fault plan. It pits individuals against a large SGI bureaucracy whose primary objective is to control and minimize its costs. If an individual does not agree with the insurance assessor regarding compensation there is no recourse to the courts for a judicial review.

As Ralph Nader noted, the big winners in this are the multi-national corporations whose profits are protected from negligence lawsuits and whose dangerous, polluting devices can now take human life with impunity. And while

Dan Parrott is a non-practicing lawyer and Regina-based environmental activist.

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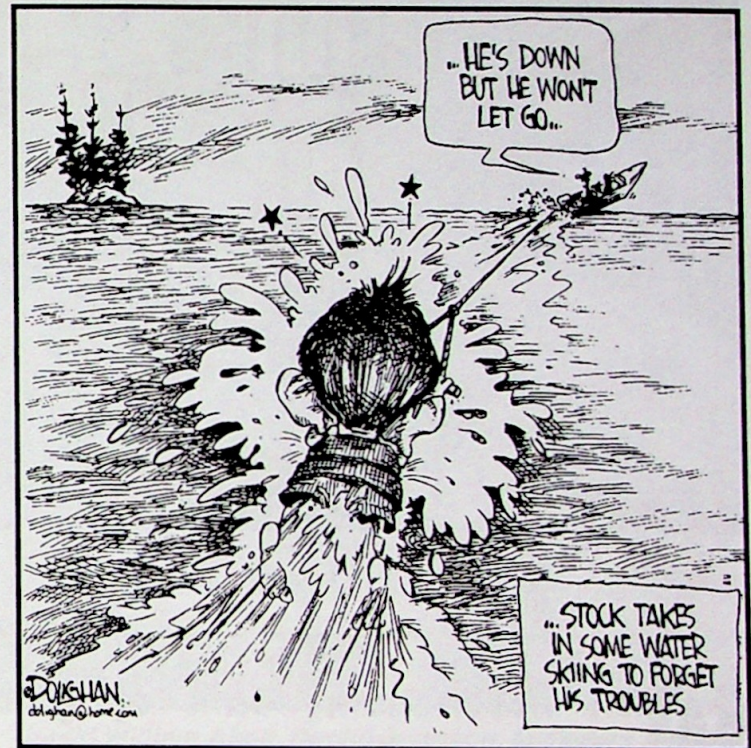
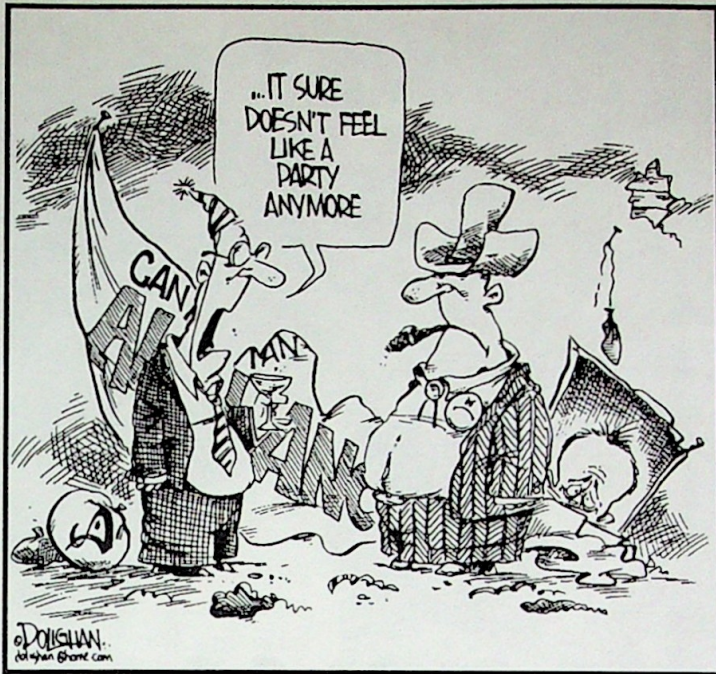
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The Political Picture



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Start planning to voice your concerns and defend your future!

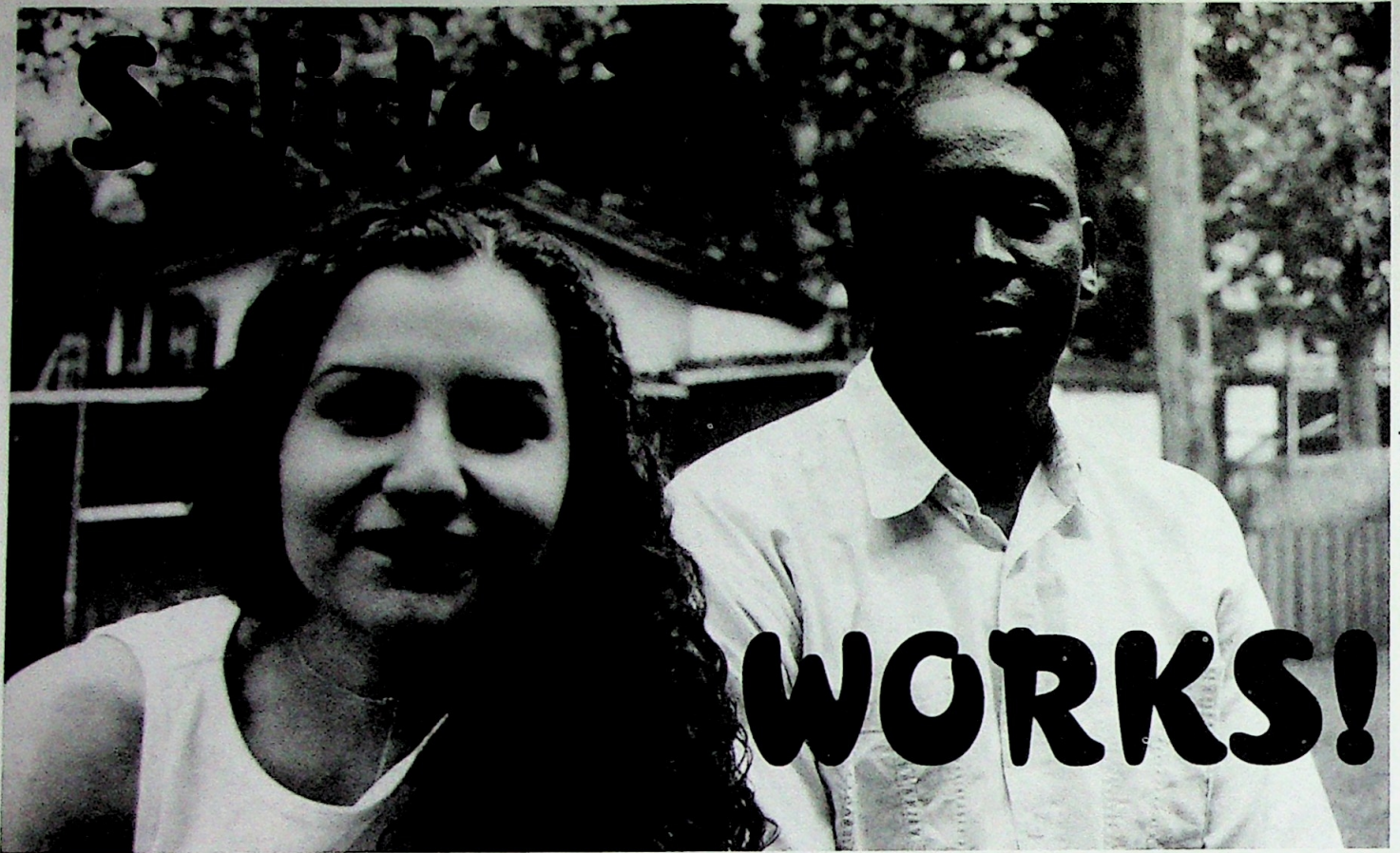


photo: Debra Brin

by Sochitl Alfaro

Sochitl Alfaro and William Akok chose Briarpatch for their work-placement.

With never-ending talk of globalization and free trade and the consequent impact these will have on us, what can be done? Well, the Canadian Labour Congress together with the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour did their part by putting on a program in the city of Regina called Solidarity WORKS! In a nutshell, the program is aimed at providing young people with the tools to defend themselves and others in the working world. This was to be accomplished through one week of intensive learning and two weeks of hands-on experience in a union or community-based organization.

On Monday June 2nd, 16 nervous young people, aged 15 to 25, drove to Moose Jaw. While thoughts of sinister, cult-like activity, "suits" galore and kiddy camp ran through some of our minds, nothing could have been further from the truth. Instead we were delighted to find three sets of open arms welcoming us. They would be our facilitators.

Each day, without fail, a light bulb went on in our heads. Whether it was about NAFTA or the Labour Standards Act, there was always something new. At times the

amount of information coming at us was overwhelming, but the dominant feeling was definitely one of empowerment (due in large part to our facilitators). I wish I could be concise enough to accurately communicate what transpired that week. Sadly, I can't. Imagine being in a room with new friends who also happen to be amazing teachers, whom you feel completely comfortable discussing anything with, then multiply that by ten. Needless to say, during that week a bubble grew around us. Now the test was to leave the safe space and have a go at the "real" world.

Week Two

Like a well-oiled machine, we were on schedule and ready to begin phase two of the program, the placements! There seemed to be a difference in the approach of the unions versus the community-based organizations. During the group's report back that week a semi-consistent pattern emerged. First, the people placed with unions seemed to dive right into activities like sitting in on bargaining collective agreements, speaking with union members and developing pamphlets. Meanwhile, the people in the community-organization camp recounted doing a lot of reading and research.

The contrasting methods of our mentors and femtors proved fruitful that very week when our crew was allotted time to speak in front of the minimum wage board. It was so strange how in a small period of time we could walk into a meeting like that and feel unified and unquestionably supporting one another. All in all, it was a great way to end the week.

Week Three

Now in the home stretch of our placements, we worked to finish the projects we had started. It was a somewhat bitter-sweet time because, as we had done the first week in connecting within our crew, we were growing attached to our work-place mentors and femtors. No need to feel bad though because we worked with wonderful people whose nature is so receptive that their door is always open. We then took leave of our placements to spend the last two days as a group.

The first order of business was to clue in the group on exactly what each one of us had done. Accordingly we all had the privilege of hearing what each organization was about and how they could potentially be a source of help. I want to say we closed with more learning, but that would be inaccurate. In reality we continued developing our skills and knowledge, and now it's up to us to do with it what we will. If we felt alone coming into Solidarity WORKS! we certainly don't now. Together we will be doing something about social justice and labour issues.

The best description I heard of our time in the

program is, "We are like candles in a holder, in that while our light may be bright it cannot project beyond the holder and our challenge is to remove it and try to reach as far as possible."

Sochitl Alfaro is studying at the University of Regina. She worked with William Akok on their two-week placement at Briarpatch.



photo: Debra Brin

Participants and facilitators: (back) William Akok, Daniel Johnson, Mickeyas Abeje, Sophie Marner, Natasha Goudar, (middle) Kathy Somers, Tricia Mathew, Amanda Freistadt, Katie Wolfe, Tabitha Handley, Trevor Ledoux, Nicholas Bonokoski, Nrinder Nann, (front) Tara Hubich, Sochitl Alfaro, Kate Beingessner, Susanne Zimmer, Crystal Kruszelnicki, (missing is Kelly Milne)



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José Bové:

The Farmer Who Plowed The Golden Arches

Ten sheep farmers in southern France got on their tractors one day in August, 1999 and headed down the highway to Millau. Instead of going to their fields, they hurled themselves into the global spotlight by dismantling the construction site of the most conspicuous symbol of American-dominated globalization: McDonalds. Bové and his colleagues knew what they were doing and this was no sudden act of whimsy or malice. They knew that their destructive act would lead to a long road through the courts but they had a cogent and important reason to seek the publicity of the legal battles. They probably did not anticipate that Bové, their spokesperson, would come to be considered the Robin Hood of France.

interview and photos by Theresa Wolfwood

José Bové, a 50 year-old farmers' union spokesperson, has many decades of experience as an activist and resister against unjust government policies. Thirty years ago he was a conscientious objector to compulsory French military service and active in the peace movement in Bordeaux. At that time the military wanted to expand a testing range in the high Larzac region of south-central France; a windswept, scoured plateau with a small population of sheep farmers. The government bought out one large land owner - not a farmer, but a speculator who had bought up property near the existing military range.

Local farmers were angry at the threatened loss of their livelihood and their rugged, beautiful homeland. They called on peace activists, including Bové, to help them organize against the military takeover. Demonstrations of over 100,000 people were frequent and as the protest continued through the 1970s, Bové and others occupied abandoned properties. Victory came in 1981 when Mitterand was elected president and canceled the military expansion. The 75 families who were squatting on the land formed an association that negotiated and signed a long-term lease for the use of the land for sheep farming. It's a hard life, but one that hardy, independent peasants have valued for centuries. The soil cover on the limestone is fragile and only a few inches thick. It can support only one



McDonalds in Millau



sheep per hectare. It is a peaceful land and I found it disturbing to think of tanks and guns desecrating its beauty.

The sheep they tend are not ordinary sheep, but special milk-sheep for Roquefort cheese. This cheese is made from milk provided by only 2000 farmers from the Larzac Roquefort region. Roquefort cheese is so special in region and production that it and Champagne were the first products awarded the prestigious "appellation controlle" designation in 1925. This summer I found three packets of Roquefort cheese selling at the Hornby Island Coop store for \$40 per kilogram. That is pretty pricey cheese anywhere. Therein lies the contrast to cheap fast-food at McDonalds. Bové says that an added hardship for local farmers is that there are no EU export subsidies for sheep-cheese, only for bovine products, meat and cereals.

We met with Bové at his home which is a 200 year old stone house in a hamlet of six farmhouses. Now that he works full-time as one of three spokespersons for the Confédération Paysanne (CP), France's second-largest farmer's union, he is not working with the sheep. His partner, Ghislaine Ricez, is the administrator of the farmers' association that holds the land in stewardship for future generations. After she left for the office we settled down for coffee as he explained the events that led to the famous McDonalds incident.

When the European Union (EU) banned the import of hormone-treated beef from the U.S.A., the WTO allowed the U.S.A. to impose 100 percent import tariffs on 70

European products. On the list was Roquefort cheese. Roquefort producers soon learned that there was no political recourse for farmers, whose sales were threatened by these tariffs, although the export of cheese and import of beef are totally unconnected. They investigated legal avenues and found that there was no court in the world where farmers could appeal to the WTO about this unfair tax.

In France the most glaring symbol of American global imperialism has to be McDonalds. Their fast junk food challenges the whole culture of French

cuisine and the golden arches soar in nearly every town and city. McDonalds is also a symbol of how the WTO attempts to control world agriculture and food consumption. After being found guilty in three courts for their property damage to the great icon, the farmers continue to appeal to higher courts. Every trial has been accompanied by demonstrations of up to 100,000 supporters from around the world. Only when they have exhausted all levels of national courts can the farmers appear before the EU court of human rights. There they can make their case that the U.S.A. tax is unfair and a violation of the rights of Roquefort producers who had nothing to do with the ban on hormone-treated beef.

At one point our talk was interrupted by a call from the French Chefs' organization asking the CP for support of their opposition to restaurant taxes of 19.6 percent. Any place that sells take-out food is taxed only 5.5 percent: another obvious benefit for fast-food chains.

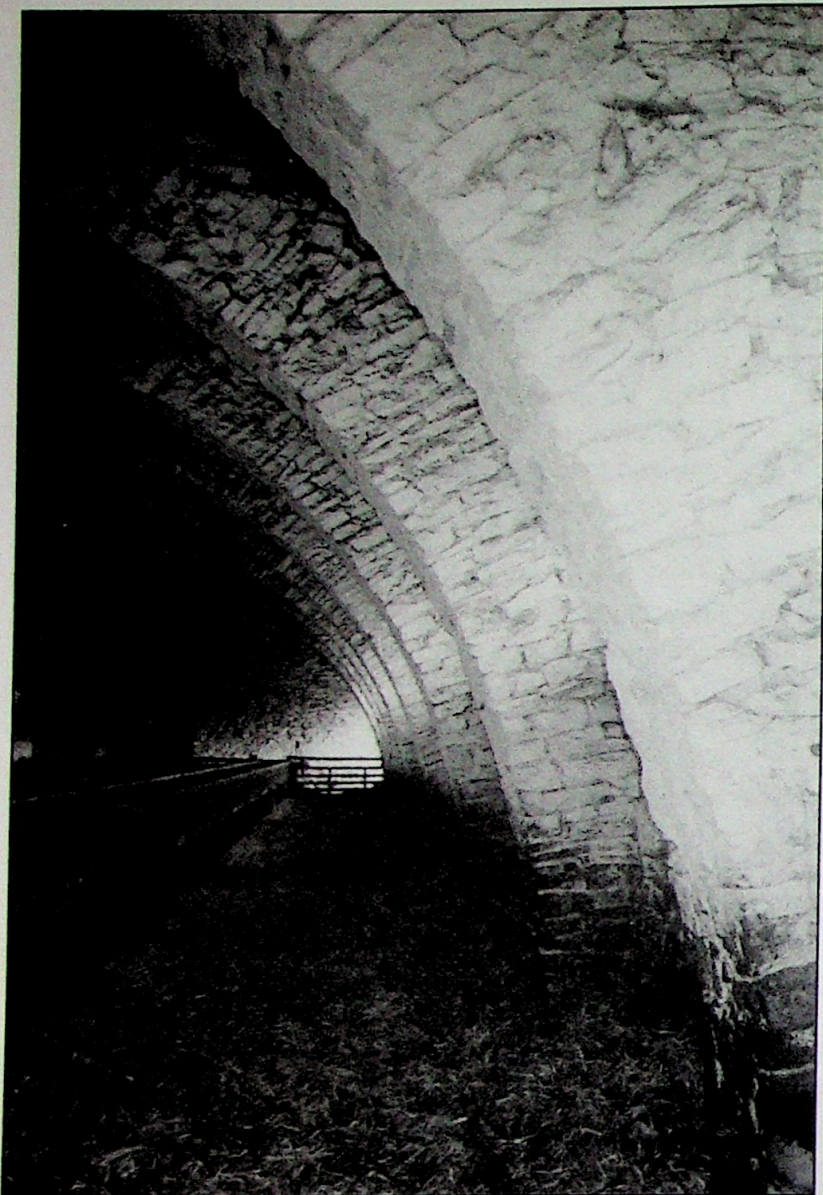
One thing made clear by talking to Bové is that he is not a one-man-show in spite of his media stardom. The CP was formed in 1987 as an amalgamation of several groups to fight against the industrialization of farming. The group saw the threat of "productivity at all costs" - the inequality of land subsidies that favour large mechanized farmers, the disregard for the health of animals and the physical environment, the lack of farm employment and the difficulties for young people to become farmers. It is a major concern that 30,000 small farms are lost every year in France and only 10,000 new farms are started.

The union also has a strong position on the effects of industrial farming and globalization on farmers in the rest of the world. The CP is a member of Via Campesina, as is the National Farmers Union in Canada. This international organization works for fair trade and decent prices, a good environment that produces good food, and secure and healthy working conditions for farmers worldwide. Bové recently went to Colombia to support the U'wa people who were being driven off their subsistence land to make room for oil development by Al Gore's company, Occidental Oil.

Bové outlined the aims of these farmer organizations. They want trade of food products, but only after food security has been established for local and national populations - the first priority of any country should be to feed its own citizens. This is contrary to the WTO ruling that any country that exports an agricultural product, even if it also fulfills all of its national needs, must allow the import of 5 percent of the same product. The result of this policy is dumping from abroad, often from countries with high subsidies. This lowers local prices with disastrous results for local producers. Farmers lose their livelihood and their land.

Bové says that food subsidies that protect national food





Traditional Sheep Barn built in 1983 by local farmers and supporters from around the world to celebrate victory over the military

security and production are acts of sovereignty, and shouldn't be dictates of the market. He passionately makes the case for creation of international agreements that establish rules for the rights of people and not rules that benefit only corporations. There must be rules for human, economic and social rights for people that also protect the environment and bio-diversity. To Bové the role of social movements is to work for these goals, to include more people and groups and to create a new globalized social society based on old traditions and new directions. It is the essence of his modern Robin Hood statement, "Le Monde n'est pas une Marchandise / The World is Not for Sale."

At the end of the interview I asked him for his views on the connection between militarism and food security. Bové replied that global militarization imposes the standardization of life and culture by the strong onto the weak. His decades-long struggle against the military has taken him from France to the South Pacific to oppose military testing, to Colombia to support the resistance of the U'wa people, and from Seattle to Quebec. He said that the symbol of this struggle is an overturned soldier's helmet filled with growing wheat. The slogan is "Arms Kill: Wheat Gives Life."

Then Bové directed us across the rugged, beautiful landscape to see the church-like stone sheep barn that was built in 1983 to celebrate the liberation of military land for farming.

Terry Wolfwood is an activist in the struggle against global militarism and will be a presenter at the conference in Victoria September 27 - 29th. (See inside front cover for details.)



"Arms have always been the instruments of barbarity"

The outside of the sheep barn is decorated with quotes from Charles de Gaulle and Albert Schweitzer in many languages.

The Colonization Continues

by Leonard Peltier

I know many of you are already familiar with the FTAA, NAFTA, the WTO, the IMF and the World Bank. I know many of you are working hard to expose what these organizations and agreements are all about and how they are taking over the world and violating human rights, labour rights, Indigenous rights, environmental protections and sovereignty rights, in each and every place they set foot. Therefore, what I would like to address is the bigger picture: the real roots of the FTAA and ways in which we can obstruct it.

Where did the FTAA get its start? Not in a conference room and not in an office. The FTAA is a continuation of the imperialism that began thousands of years ago in Europe with the domination of Indigenous Peoples whose self-subsisting land and way of life were taken away so that greedy feudalists could reign. Ever since, Indigenous Peoples have been forced into submission, if not obliteration, in the name of civilization and progress all over the globe. Here we are in the 21st century, and the world has far from benefited. I do not need to explain the Earth's devastation, the overwhelming poverty and the wars that have resulted from practices that put profit before the very survival of Mother Earth and the human race.

Advocates of the FTAA would not dare refer to their policies as forms of colonization or feudalism because these practices are now widely scorned. Instead they will justify their actions in the name of "development" for the "poor" countries of Central and South America. Development? What the first peoples of the Americas need is "recovery," not development. Recovery from the very same colonization, domination and genocide that multi-national corporations want to perpetuate for their own gains today.

Now we must continue, not only to condemn the practices of these trade organizations and policies, but also to implement and support means of self-suffi-

ciency both in our communities and abroad. We must support Indigenous movements like that of the Zapatistas and the U'wa who are fighting to maintain their land base and self-sufficient way of life. We must support the small farmers and farm workers who provide their communities with healthy foods to eat. We must create and support innovative projects on Indian reservations, inner cities and third world countries that promote self-sufficiency and better living conditions.

We must unite beyond the boundaries of race, class, belief systems and age that all too often divide us. If we do not unite, we will be defeated one by one, just as they destroyed the American Indian Movement who fought so hard for Native sovereignty; the Black Panthers, who developed much needed community-based programs and struggled for self-determination; the movements in Central America that sought to implement schools, social programs and land reforms; and the unions who fought for humane working conditions. Most important, we must break down the barriers that divide us in our own backyards.

We need to develop a global culture that teaches us, as my ancestors did, to think carefully about the impact our actions and policies will have on Mother Earth, each other and future generations before we act upon them. If we can do this, then surely we can win.

Leonard Peltier is a citizen of the Anishinabe and Lakota Nations, a grandfather, an artist, a writer and an Indigenous rights activist. He has spent the last 26 years in prison for a crime he did not commit. Amnesty International considers him a "political prisoner" who should be "immediately and unconditionally released." For over 26 years the FBI and the American Department of Justice have refused to release over 6000 pages of the case file they hold on Leonard Peltier which they deem secret.

MUMIA ABU-JAMAL BIRTHS THE POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS OF A GENERATION

by an Anonymous Student

IN THE END, THE TAPE WAS NOT PLAYED. NERVOUS ADMINISTRATORS BREATHED A SIGH OF RELIEF, ORGANIZERS FACED FRUSTRATION AND DISAPPOINTMENT, GRADUATING SENIORS SHED TEARS OF JOY, ANXIETY AND SORROW. THE QUESTION OF WHETHER THE VOICE OF POLITICAL PRISONER MUMIA ABU-JAMAL WOULD BE HEARD AT CASTLEMONT HIGH SCHOOL'S CLASS OF 2001 GRADUATION LINGERED THROUGHOUT THE CEREMONY, AND WAS ANSWERED ONLY WHEN THE GRADUATES WERE RELEASED FROM THEIR SEATS, SEARCHING FOR RELATIVES AND FRIENDS IN THE SMALL AND PURPOSEFULLY SUBDUED CROWD.

The controversy began when the senior class, led by some experienced Youth Against Community Injustice Nia (YACIN: Nia is "for a purpose" in Swahili) organizers, struggled with a conservative graduation committee to have Mumia Abu-Jamal placed on the ballot as graduation speaker. The senior class then voted overwhelmingly for Mumia and, when their first vote was ignored, voted again and again for Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Ronald Miller, Castlemont principal for one short year, overrode the senior vote under pressure from Jason Hodge, who represents the Castlemont area on the school board. They selected Pastor Bob Jackson, a local pastor who had not appeared on the ballot as the seniors had made it clear in committee that they wanted a non-denominational speaker. Pastor Bob courageously sided with the students, but left the final decision to Miller, who refused a final attempt by 20 seniors only a day before the graduation to allow a three minute tape by Mumia to be played as a part of Pastor Bob's 12 minute commencement speech.

On June 13th, the night of graduation, only a handful of seniors were without bold green "Labour for Mumia" ribbons worn on their caps and the front of their gowns and over half of them had at some point during the

ceremony whispered, hissed or mouthed the go-ahead to their valedictorian, Massanda D'Johns, "You have to play the tape!" During the ceremony, graduating senior Marcella Vegas left her seat to secretly slip a tape recorder under her gown in her determination to hear the speaker she and her classmates had chosen. However, in the end the tape was not played.

The defeat is significant, and its presence was felt ominously throughout the graduation. It was a repressive occurrence and terribly unbefitting of a class so powerful, articulate and determined as that of Castlemont High, 2001. But the struggle for Mumia Abu-Jamal as graduation speaker is a profound victory for Mumia, for all political prisoners and for the movement. That victory can be found in the eyes, the voices, and the newly critical minds of the 180 young people who chose Mumia to deliver them into life beyond high school. That victory can be found in the dozens of young, courageous, determined and militant YACIN organizers who created the conditions at Castlemont High School and in their community for that revolutionary vote. In the end, the tape may not have been played. But Mumia Abu-Jamal's message of resistance and struggle towards freedom has truly been heard by young

people otherwise completely disempowered by the system, and has inspired a new generation of political activists.

The story of Mumia Abu-Jamal has inspired Castlemont High School students since 1996, when the first 15 youth, after studying the case in class, went after school to a march in San Francisco with members of the Young Comrades (an Oakland based organization of African youth organizers) and their teacher. Two years later, Mumia's life was once again in immediate crisis. This time, more than 45 students attended their first march and rally. Many of them spoke at the rally held by the San Francisco Mobilization to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal. They returned empowered, rejuvenated, inspired and determined to organize all of Oakland's high school students to free Mumia.

Castlemont students' presence at the rally and the lessons that introduced them to the case inspired the Oakland Teach-in for Mumia and their exhaustive outreach to other high schools. Their presence at press conferences, teachers' union meetings, and poetry slams to educate their peers propelled the Oakland Teach-in into international attention and an important media breakthrough for Mumia's case. Armed with organizing skills and essentially politically baptized by fire, the students organized YACIN to continue their fight for Mumia and to struggle for justice in their own community.

Since its beginning, YACIN has been at the forefront of political struggles in the Bay Area. The organization has continued to campaign for Mumia through education, community outreach, protests, spoken word and rallies. Students continuously recognized the profound effect Mumia had on their own political development. "Mumia fought for me. He fought against police brutality and community injustice. I have to fight for Mumia. And how can I fight for Mumia if I don't take a stand against the injustice that he fought against? He is a political prisoner because he fought for freedom and justice. Mumia would fight against proposition 21 (harsher penalties for youth), against racial profiling, against turning our schools into prisons. I stand up for him because he stood up for me, but he also taught me that I have to stand up for myself and my community", says Veneya Camp, graduating senior and YACIN leader.

YACIN's influence on Castlemont's campus has been profound, and the reactionary attempt to destroy and dis-

credit the young organization has been just as relentless as the students' own organizing. Senior YACIN leaders took much of the heat this year as it became clear that the majority of the senior class supported their stand for Mumia as graduation speaker. Massanda D'Johns and Veneya Camp, two YACIN founders and graduating seniors, were alternately harassed and cajoled daily by teachers and administrators who suddenly were tremendously concerned about "why they felt so negatively towards the school." Veneya's right to graduate was threatened if she continued to be active in YACIN.

Underclass YACIN members who vocally supported the senior cause were under constant scrutiny. The administration went so far as to call several YACIN members' parents and attempted to convince them their youth were

being brainwashed into being disrespectful by demanding that changes be made to the prison-like conditions and criminalizing policies being practiced in their school and community. It was a difficult year for YACIN. That the organization survived the onslaught and emerged as vocal and determined as ever is a victory in itself.

But the most

pronounced victory is the far-reaching and profound impact that the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal has had on the generation that most adults fear rather than look towards for freedom from the systems of oppression that govern our lives. YACIN was created because of Mumia. It is rare to find a student from Castlemont High School who is not well versed in even the fine points of Mumia's case, and more often than not that knowledge has been brought by a peer, not a teacher. Young people are able to articulate their rage against police brutality, classism, and the criminalization of their generation. They are able to transform that rage into positive and direct action. It is very rare to attend an action or protest in the Bay Area without noting the pronounced presence of Castlemont Students and the leadership of YACIN.

So, in the end, the Castlemont commencement speech was not delivered by Mumia Abu-Jamal. Ultimately, however, Mumia's words have reached much farther. Mumia has inspired a new generation of politically and critically conscious young people from within the confines of a school that systematically oppresses and silences the

"MUMIA FOUGHT FOR ME. HE FOUGHT AGAINST POLICE BRUTALITY AND COMMUNITY INJUSTICE. I HAVE TO FIGHT FOR MUMIA. AND HOW CAN I FIGHT FOR MUMIA IF I DON'T TAKE A STAND AGAINST THE INJUSTICE THAT HE FOUGHT AGAINST? HE IS A POLITICAL PRISONER BECAUSE HE FOUGHT FOR FREEDOM AND JUSTICE."

low-income, working-class African, Latino, Asian and Pacific Islander youth of East Oakland. Mumia Abu-Jamal has indeed provided a voice for the voiceless, and that youth voice will resound far beyond the confines of one graduation ceremony. For this reason, the struggle for Mumia as graduation speaker has not ended in defeat, but is an ongoing and complex struggle that gives rise to infinite revolutionary possibilities as a newly politicized generation comes of age.

YACIN Voices for Mumia:

Laressa M. Hailey, 11th grade YACIN member

Mumia is an excellent choice for graduation speaker. You see, we of this generation are far more into the struggle - politics, being activists - than people realize. We fight for what we believe is right and what we want. Mumia has experienced the street life, poverty, police brutality - everyday things we go through. He has probably forgotten more than I even know. This struggle is going to go on to the next class, and so on.

Portia Smith, 12th grade YACIN member

Adults always want to control and run everything. Students care a lot about their future and they want someone powerful to speak to them. Mumia is a very strong and powerful man because even though he is going through so much, he won't give up. He is someone who wants to send us on our way to start our future. Someone who has been through the struggle and has come from the same place we have.

It is so hard growing up with no positive role models to look up to in today's generation. It seems that Cointelpro and the prison industrial complex has them all locked up! But it's okay for a rapper or a basketball star to be my hero. I have learned about Martin Luther King since I was five years old. Martin is not here to speak to me, nor is Malcolm X, but if I could get a

I'M GONNA STAND UP FOR MUMIA LIKE HE DID FOR ME, AND I'M GOING TO BECOME A LEADER LIKE MUMIA. AND I KNOW THAT AS A YOUNG REVOLUTIONARY I COULD BE THE NEXT BLACK POLITICAL PRISONER, THE NEXT ASSATA, THE NEXT MUMIA. PEOPLE, WE CAN NOT LET THIS GO ON!

speaker close to those great Black leaders it would be Mumia.

I believe that adults barely know us. They don't listen long enough to find out. They should take the time to help us and hear us before they throw down what we say. Free Mumia! Free all political prisoners!

Veneya Camp, 12th grade YACIN member

Because of leaders like Mumia and Assatta Shakur, I know what I want to be in life. I really want to be a revolutionary. I'm tired of people who won't stand up for anything and pretend like they're free, or just complain about their lives. I want to keep learning and fighting against oppression. Learning about Mumia's case has taught me a whole lot. Being in YACIN changed my life, and I joined YACIN because I believe that Mumia is innocent. I'm gonna stand up for Mumia like he did for me, and I'm going to become a leader like Mumia. And I know that as a young revolutionary I could be the next Black political prisoner, the next Assata, the next Mumia. People, we can not let this go on! Free Mumia! Free all political prisoners!

The writer is a student at Castlemont and a member of YACIN who wishes to remain anonymous because of fear of reprisal.



On a Move!

Commencement Speech for Castlemont High School Recorded on May 24, 2001 by Mumia Abu-Jamal

Congratulations to the fine young graduates of Castlemont High. I congratulate y'all, in particular your valedictorian, Massanda D'Johns, for your accomplishments. I know that your parents, your teachers and your community are proud of you for all succeeding thus far, after so many years of hard study.

For most of you there is doubtless relief, but I bet there is also fear. Fear of what comes next. Fear of the world of adults. But I know that this is not the beginning of fear, for fear has walked with many a young life in this age of America. But, I think that's for a simple reason. You have grown up in a world that fears you, you've come to age in world that does not love you, and the realization of that fact is terrifying.

Of course, your Mom loves you, and for real a mother's love is a powerful and wonderful thing. Your Dads may love, and perhaps some of your teachers have ignited in you the love of learning. But this government, the political order, the police, the media and the vast dizzying world of business do not love you. They show that in how they interact with you everyday. Not only do they not love you, they fear you. Your very youth, your strength, your energy, your wild raging lust for life, makes them see you with fear, or almost worse, with envy. For they know that within you is a force that is like that of a hurricane - wild, natural, untamed and irrepressible. It can literally change everything it touches.



Need we argue about why I say they don't love you? No one would claim to love someone they made to live in a ghetto. No one would claim to love someone while they force you to live in hopelessness. Would you love someone and force them to lay down in the street at gunpoint? Would you stop their cars and harass them because they're black, brown or yellow? Would you refuse to teach them the proud history of the resistance of their ancestors? Can this be love? But take heart, for your youth is a time when

love floods you, like light floods the sun!

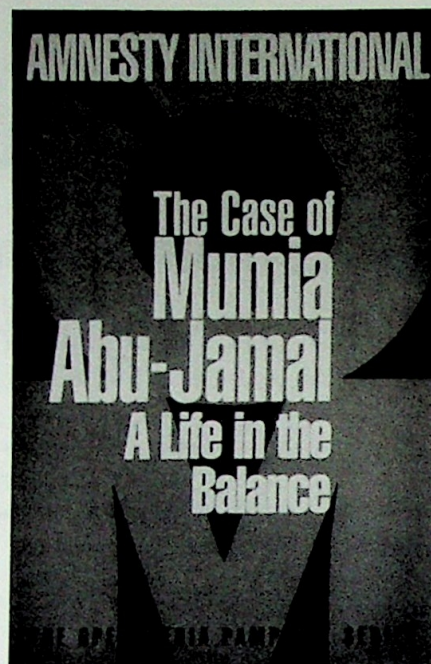
I love you! Love yourself. Love your parents. Love your community. Love your people. Love your fellow graduates, for you are all gifts of the Force of Life. For if you love each other, you will defend each other; you will know that you are not alone. You will know that togetherness is a powerful source of strength. Love conquers fear. Love vanquishes hatred. Love expands into the hearts of those you love. It makes us all more human.

There's something else I wanted to say to you. When I received the invitation to speak at Castlemont, I was forced to think of my own high school years. It was quite a few years ago, but not so long ago for me to forget that I dropped out of high school. If ever there was a reason to disqualify me from addressing you, perhaps it was here. By dropping out, I joined a revolutionary movement. Back in those days we really believed that The Revolution was around the corner and was almost upon us. It didn't happen, but I don't regret it.

But you young folks live in a world that's considerably different than 30 years ago. There is no war raging in a far off land. There is no crisis emerging from the assassination of Black leaders, like Malcolm X or Martin King, or of a president. There's no Cuban Missile Crisis. But, the funny thing is, there's probably just as much, if not more, youth and student activism. Today, kids cross state and national borders to protest the dangers of globalism, the racist death penalty, the rule of politics by the big corporations, human rights or even environmental concerns. I see the kind of organizing that kids are doing and I am thrilled silly. I love it! Remember, I said that you are feared? That's one of the reasons. For your youth gives movements such as these "oomph!" I invite you to share your youthful energy with some of these movements. Well, it's your day and it's your time!

One final word. Education is more than an individual accomplishment; it is a communal one. You are here because your ancestors, your parents' parents' parents, dreamed of you. They dreamed of you walking in a light and freedom that they could barely imagine. They prayed for a day when learning to read and write wouldn't be a secret punishable by death. They hoped for a time when those who come after them would look back and give their sweet, loving souls some rest. You are here today because of them in yesteryear. Their blood runs in your veins; their faces stare back from the mirror, and their voices echo in your song. Yeah, even in (especially in) hip-hop. Do not forget them, for they are part of this celebration too! I thank you! I congratulate y'all! I wish you every blessing! I love you!

Mumia Abu-Jamal is incarcerated on death row in Pennsylvania, U.S.A. He has steadfastly maintained his innocence since his arrest in 1981.



The Case of Mumia Abu-Jamal: A Life in the Balance.

"Based on it's review of the trial transcript and other original documents, Amnesty International has determined that numerous aspects of Mumia Abu-Jamal's case clearly fail to meet minimum international standards safeguarding the fairness of legal proceedings. Amnesty International therefore believes that the interests of justice would best be served by the granting of a new trial to Mumia Abu-Jamal."

To order a copy of this booklet contact Seven Stories Press, 149 Watts St., New York, NY 10013 or www.sevenstories.com.

Time Enough; a 2002 Political Prisoner/ Prisoner of War Calendar



Representing freedom fighters from liberation movements and struggles for self determination in Puerto Rico, Mexico, the USA and Canada. Including Mumia, Leonard Peltier, Zapatista prisoners, Native resistance to colonisation in Canada, former Black Panther Party members STILL in prison...Places anti-globalisation movement in its historical context. Proceeds raised from the calendar will go to medical support and amnesty campaigns for political prisoners. Pre-order your calendar: send cheque or money order made out to QPIRG Concordia. Add \$3.00 shipping for the first calendar and \$ 1.00 for each additional calendar.

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Union backs away from the Struggle

An Urgent Appeal to Trade Unionists, Community Activists and Individuals.

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Canadian Auto Workers Union's National President, Buzz Hargrove, has decided to cut funding to the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP). This follows an eviction action we carried out at the office of Tory Finance Minister, James Flaherty. Hargrove was apparently offended that participants in this action may have damaged some of Flaherty's furniture.

For a poor peoples' organization like OCAP, the loss of the CAW's \$10,000 a year is a serious blow. This situation is further impacted because we have received this money every September for the past five years and have come to rely and base our annual spending on it. To lose it on this short notice threatens our ability to operate our two small offices and pay our staff. It endangers the work we do to defend people facing such abuses as eviction, deportation and denial of benefits, and it generally undermines our struggles for the rights of the poor and homeless.

Of even greater importance, ever since our March on Queen's Park last June, OCAP has pressed for a renewed united struggle against the Harris Tories based not on outdated models of 'protest' but on methods of real resistance. We have initiated a call for an economic disruption campaign to hurt the corporate cash registers of Ontario to the point where a price tag is put on the Tory Agenda that makes them cost ineffective in the eyes of their wealthy backers. We have traveled throughout the Province visiting First Nations communities, union halls, schools, universities and community centres.

This has led to the formation of a common front of over sixty organizations ready to launch a counter attack on Harris that will sweep across Ontario during October. Our ability to carry on organizing in this most vital area of our work is also at risk as a result of Hargrove's funding cut.

That the media, the cops and the Durham Crown Attorney's Office were ready to label our action at Flaherty's Office an act of "terrorism," to attack us and throw our members in jail was no great surprise. However, that Buzz

Hargrove was so offended by our pitching a Tory minister's office furniture out in the street was astounding to us. Unlike the homeless who've died on the streets, the sick who are denied adequate health care, the victims of the Walkerton disaster and workers who will be prevented from refusing unsafe work, Flaherty's filing cabinets felt no pain. Very frankly, as much as we respect the CAW, the stand taken by its National President is out of touch with the tasks that face us if we are to build a movement that can stop the Tories. The political thugs at Queen's Park just don't understand the language of fair play and respectability that Buzz wants us

to use on them but, when they know we're ready to fight back just as seriously as they're prepared to attack us, that's when they'll understand us perfectly.

When we launch that kind of an uncompromising struggle, that's when the defeat of the Harris Agenda will be on the table. Has so little been learned from Quebec City that

Unlike the homeless who've died on the streets, the sick who are denied adequate health care, the victims of the Walkerton disaster... , Flaherty's filing cabinets felt no pain.

the best we can hope for in Ontario is token protest and a refusal to 'go to the fence' by those whose full fledged support would be decisive? OCAP strongly believes that we simply can't allow the old patterns of compromise and accommodation to hold us back any longer. Moral arguments and passive indignation bounce off the Tories without effect. Their Government must be thrown into political crisis by a social mobilization that massively disrupts their workings, threatens their support base and undermines their whole ability to proceed with their attacks. But we can't help to build such a mobilization without your help. On this basis, we are asking union locals, community organizations, activists and all who support OCAP's struggles, to help us rapidly repair the damage done by Hargrove's unfortunate decision.

In Solidarity,
Ontario Coalition Against Poverty
416-925-6939 ocap@tao.ca www.ocap.ca

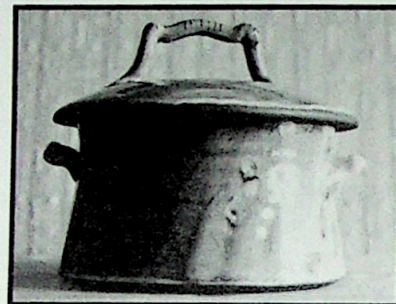
PLEASE MAIL YOUR CHEQUES TO OCAP AT:
249 SHERBOURNE STREET,
TORONTO, ON M5A 2R9.

Art Raffle 2001

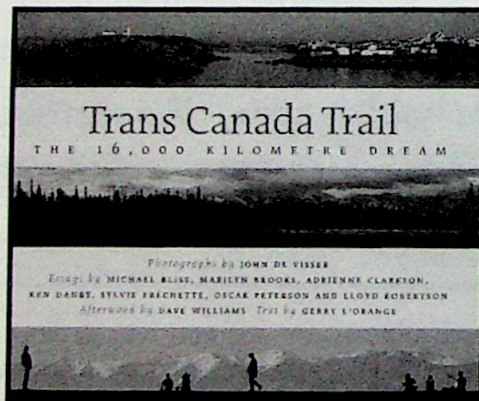
And the lucky winners are:



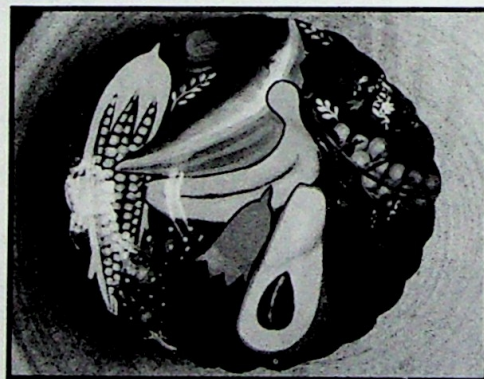
artist: Elaine Brière, Mission BC
winner: Ken Collier, St. Albert AB



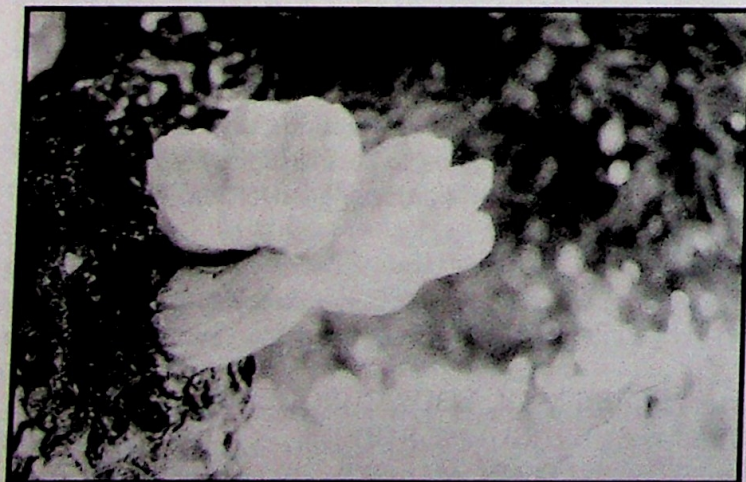
artist: Ann McLellan, Regina SK
winner: Carolyn Bell, Vancouver BC



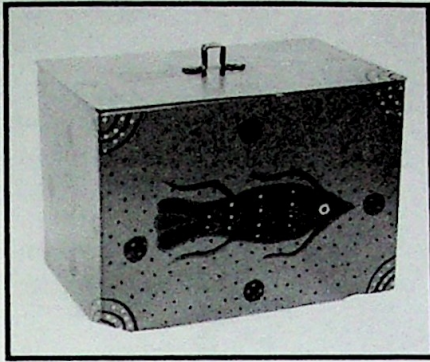
artist: The Boston Mills Press, USA
winner: Cory Hallett, Regina SK



artist: Haitian artisan
winner: Tom Pascoe, Whitby ON



artist: Don Jedlic (Oktober Revolution), Regina SK
winner: Donna Nelson, Regina SK



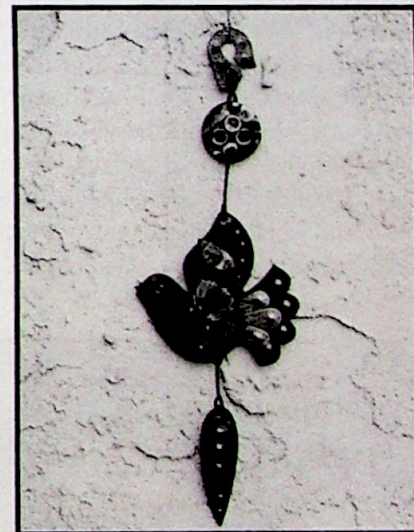
artist: Kenyan Artisan
winner: Fred Furlong, Halifax NS



artist: Sheila Mann (F/8 Custom Photo), Regina SK
winner: Kathy Winslow, Regina SK



artist: Wayne Pollock, Francis SK
winner: Ashley Wood, Meadow Lake SK



artist: Chilean Artisan (Sask. International Labour Program)
winner: Dave Thomson, White Rock BC



artist: Jennifer LaFontaine (According to Us), Toronto ON
winner: Gordon Christie, Calgary AB

The 2001 Briarpatch Art Raffle was a huge success. Thousands of tickets were sold from coast to coast. We especially thank the artists who donated their artwork for our raffle. Hats off to Larry Raynard and Joanna Kirsch at Focus 91 in Regina for their superb framing. Above all, we thank all the Briarpatch subscribers who bought and sold tickets on our behalf.

Eyewitness to War
(first film in the series):
Canadian Women of Courage
Produced by Lori Kuffner
& Barb Campbell
Cooper Rock Pictures Inc.
Wednesdays starting Sept. 19th
at 9 PM E.S.T.
on History Television

reviewed by Debra Brin

Disillusioned by the inability of capitalism to deal with the unemployment crisis, Gladys Arnold was intrigued by Hitler's plans to put everyone to work. She left her job as a journalist in Regina and travelled to Europe in 1935 to satisfy her political curiosity and examine this alternative. She had \$500 and the promise of \$10 per week if she sent home 2000 words.

For five years Arnold watched the approach of a war while others were in denial. She was the only Canadian correspondent in Europe. After settling in France, she travelled extensively, especially throughout Ger-

many where her admiration of fascism quickly faded.

Gladys Arnold's experiences are artfully conveyed using news reels, her letters home, her news articles as well as through an interview done recently.

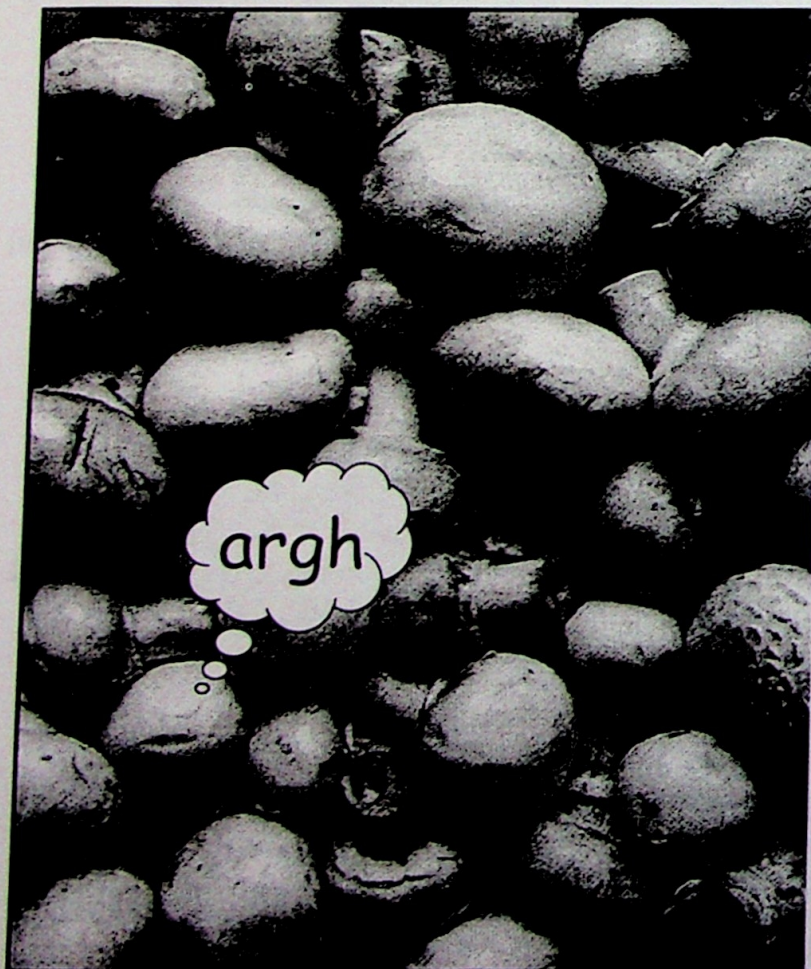
Her transformation from pacifist to activist followed her exposure to the horrors of war. Eventually forced to flee Paris with the thousands of people advancing ahead of the German army, she arrived in England at about the same time as Charles de Gaulle who was being largely ignored in his struggle to garner support for the French Resistance. Arnold returned to Canada to rally support both here and in the U.S.A. for the Free French. Her press connections enabled her to have access to influential people which helped turn the tides of opinion about who really represented the people in France. In 1945 she returned and followed the army into Germany to document that terrible phase of the war.



Arnold is still the role model she was over 60 years ago. She still has powerful words of wisdom about the need to find peaceful means to resolve conflict.

Judging from this film, the series promises to provide awe-inspiring accounts of the lives of courageous women who served in WWII as nurses, show entertainers and even a tough commander who evacuated 2000 Dutch internees through jungles, mountains and a hostile rebellion. Joan Bamford Fletcher was later admired for her bravery but described as "too tough for a wife" by the Japanese soldiers under her command.

If you're like me and don't have cable TV - don't worry! You can purchase a copy of the series. Call 306-790-5690 for details.



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Working Together For Saskatchewan

Right-Wing Populism in America: Too Close for Comfort

by Chip Berlet
and Matthew N. Lyons
Guilford Publications,
N.Y., 2000, \$21.95.
ISBN 1-57230-562-2

reviewed by Ruth Latta

From the beginning of its turbulent history, the United States has produced backlashes against trends or movements toward liberation, social reform or revolution. Although Berlet and Lyons confine their study to the United States, their book is relevant to Canadians. In an age of instantaneous communication both good and bad ideas can spread in the twinkling of an eye; indeed, American political phenomena often seem to us "too close for comfort."

In recent years we too have witnessed the rise of the Christian right and a new conservative party. Historically right-wing populist movements have sprung up simultaneously in Canada and the U.S.A.

Berlet and Lyons define as "populist" any movement which emphasizes "the people," and takes aim at either elite or special interest groups. The element of backlash makes a populist movement right-wing. Another characteristic is

"producerism," the notion of a hardworking, middle group exploited by parasites at the top and bottom of society. Producerism goes hand in hand with the defence of the traditional family and with the tendency to demonize and scapegoat.

In this thorough study, Berlet and Lyons go back to the beginning of American history. "The central tragedy of the American Revolution," they write, "is that with few exceptions, it deflected people's legitimate grievances and aspirations away from a fuller examination of the oppressive structures and elite groups within colonial society." It accelerated the "plunder and killing of Indians" and pushed aside the aspirations of slaves and women.

The authors travel chronologically through American history, examining many movements, including the Ku Klux Klan, the Progressive movement, Henry Ford's antisemitic campaign, the John Birch Society, the current religious right and the patriot and militia movements. Their book focuses exclusively on populist groups of the right, not those of the left.

People join right-wing populist groups because of anxiety over change, fear of losing status, a sense of disempowerment and the lack of a leftist

radical alternative. They embrace narratives that portray them as victims. The authors contend that it is a mistake to dismiss them as a lunatic fringe: "Most people in right-wing populist movements don't get up in the morning and say to themselves, 'I'm going to victimize oppressed groups today to get more power and privilege.' What they are more likely to say is, 'I want to get my fair share.'" Their targets seem to them either immoral, or more powerful than they are or receiving an unfair advantage.

The authors caution readers against romanticizing any movement just because it begins in the grassroots and brings people together against powerful institutions. A right-wing populist movement may contain some legitimate grievances as well as selfish ones, but the latter usually triumph over the former. Rather than dismiss right-wing populist movements as "lunatic fringe", the authors contend that we should consider them complex and dangerous: complex because of the way they blend issues, and dangerous because they lure and channel people into misguided efforts that "only serve to heighten inequality and oppression."

Ruth Latta is an author and can be reached at relatta@cyberus.ca.

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Civil Society in Question by Jamie Swift

Between the Lines,
Toronto, 1999.

(in co-operation with the
South Asia Partnership)
\$16.95

reviewed by Phil Johnson

This book by Jamie Swift (*Cut and Run: The Assault on Canada's Forests; Wheel of Fortune: Work and Life in the Age of Falling Expectations*) was written before the mass protests against globalization began. We've seen (or been involved in) these demonstrations in Seattle, Quebec City, Genoa and elsewhere. A recurring image from the summits has dozens of political and business leaders on the inside, and tens of thousands of protestors (civil society) on the outside.

But I need to be careful when I say that the protests are "against globalization"; more accurately, they are for a very different kind of economic and political arrangement than the one that has emerged in the last couple of decades. They are protests for democracy, but a democracy that is more than a ballot every four years with heavy lobbying by business in the interim. The protestors want an expanded form of democracy, including a more participatory and humane democracy than the pinched one currently on offer at the various leadership summits.

This is a book about many things - NGO's, the free market, community, North/South relations, self-help movements - but above all, this is a book about democracy. We must remember, says Swift through a quote from Vaclav Havel, that democracy is an ideal which we can approach but never fully attain.

This book asks, and answers, many questions, not the least of which is "What is civil society?" In the last

decade, the concept of civil society has become an industry in itself. Conferences about it abound. There has been an explosion of self help groups, associations, lobbyists and community service providers. Is this a revolution from the left, or a recognition that government is not the most efficient provider of aid and services after all?

Civil Society in Question



According to Swift, civil society is a very wide umbrella that covers all manner of activities undertaken by citizens on a voluntary basis, by free association and without a profit motive, in order to work for objectives valued by the group. It occupies that cavernous space ignored by or poorly served by market and state. Here is a short list of who qualifies as civil society: trade unions, the Business Council on National Issues, Amnesty International, transition houses, food banks, the National Citizens Coalition, the Sierra Club, Briarpatch Magazine, church groups, tenant associations... and on and on. Clearly, both the left and the right are part of and approve of civil society.

Swift carefully places civil society outside the state, outside the market, yet always affected by each. To demonstrate this often uneasy, always fluid relationship, he provides us with several examples (case studies really) of volunteer organizations to show how their behaviour and goals are influenced by pressures from the market or from government (these days usually by an alliance of the two). Noteworthy are the deftly told stories

of the Victorian Order of Nurses in Ontario and the Sarvodaya Shramadama Movement in Sri Lanka.

As well as practical examples of civil society in action, Swift provides us with a little history: 1800's Scotland, the rise of the free market and the self interested individual, the resultant vacuum on the public inter-

est side. He also provides a little theory: some great thinkers had ideas about civil society, including Adam Smith, Karl Marx, Antonio

Gramsci, Karl Polanyi through to contemporary commentators such as Mohammad Qadeer and Neera Chandhoke.

In his thoughtful conclusion, Swift says that "civil society, it would seem, is a necessary but insufficient concept in the continuing project to expand democratic space... Effective associational revolution necessarily involves a collective action that crosses the shifting border between civil society and the public world - the world of politics and the state. Concrete, significant change requires grappling with political power to redistribute resources and put more control into the hands of the people who have for centuries been excluded... official politics need to be supplemented by associational work - the organizing, the volunteering, the coalition-building, the construction of alternative institutions..."

And what's more, he is saying throughout this excellent small book, it is time for progressive civil society to go global.

Phil Johnson is a member of the Briarpatch board of directors.

CYBER-NATURE

"People who are serious about espionage or crime wouldn't use a worm, typically, as part of their method because it's difficult to control and they have a tendency to be relatively noisy."

- Scott Blake,
director of security product strategy for BindView
Development Corp. commenting on the recent
internet disruptions caused by the Code Red worm,
The Globe and Mail, August 2, 2001.

Say What??



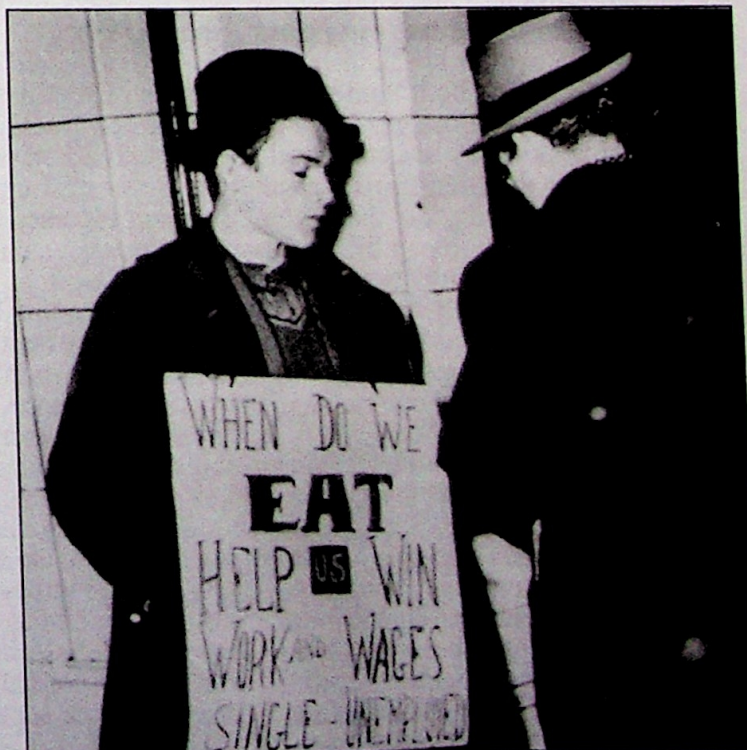
Jean-Teflon

MAYBE KANANASKIS?

"Those who thought that a "retreat-like" setting removed from the real world could be achieved for such a meeting on a Canadian university campus were seriously mistaken."

- Ted Hughes,
in his inquiry report to the Commission for Public
Complaints Against the RCMP on the 1997 APEC
meeting that found improper government interfer-
ence in RCMP security measures which led to the
violent assault on protesters, The Globe and Mail,
August 8, 2001. He was responding to the testimony
of officials from the Prime Minister's Office.

1930 - Hard Times



2001 - Hard Times

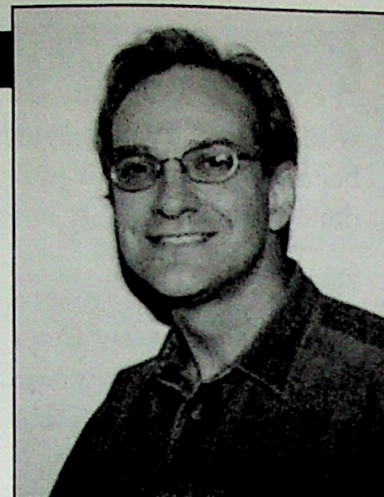
"What you are bidding on is my services as a hunger-striker. What you get is a healthy, athletic 22-year-old male willing to go on a complete hunger-strike (water only) for a maximum of 21 days to support your cause. Very few people can watch a healthy person go voluntarily so close to death."

- Item # 1602748545,
appeared on the internet eBay auction site on May
30th, 2001. There were no bids.

There's a man at the door...

Ah-hah!

by Richard Stringham



Learning can be an uncomfortable experience; especially when the learner is being confronted by their own perceptions and values.

Take the recent case of a young Alberta woman in her senior high school class (we'll call her Sarah). Sarah and her classmates participated in an activity: "There's a Man at the Door". In the exercise, we are faced with a scenario in which a man shows up at our home. Tired and hungry, he asks for a meal so that he can continue his journey home to his family. We are asked what we would do.

Additional scenarios become more desperate to the point where a group of families live on our back lawn in tents with vegetable gardens to provide their food. There are no government agencies to assist. A long range solution must be found. The scenarios have put the issue of poverty in the most uncomfortable of places: our own backyard.

Sarah was resolute. There would be no assistance to these people, and camping in her back yard was out of the question. In front of many of her peers, she stood her ground. Others took sides. The debate intensified. Finally in a burst of frustration and pride she pointed out that her parents had both come from disadvantaged backgrounds, but through hard work, they had prospered.

I still regret the sarcasm in my own voice as I responded: "So that's the answer! If the poor people of the world worked harder, their problems would be solved!" Everyone in the class, including Sarah, knew that hard work alone would not alleviate the plight of the world's poor. On the other hand, neither were the solutions obvious.

We talked about a young teenager named Pedro. Pedro works in a Colombian city marketplace to support his mother and siblings. His ambition is to become a systems engineer but with a degenerative eye condition and no prospects for completing his basic education, Pedro's future is less than bright. Deeply touched, many of Sarah's class-

mates wanted to know where they could send money to reach Pedro. I had no such address to offer.

We had covered a lot of emotional ground and it was only noon. The views of Sarah and her peers are not uncommon. This same exercise reveals similar responses from adult groups. Our mental pictures of world poverty take us into highly uncomfortable zones. Our personal values are challenged to the core. Why are so many people in this world poor? How can we help? Will anything that we do really help, or will it just add to the legendary accounts of inappropriate aid? What will I personally have to sacrifice?

We spent the afternoon building an understanding of how co-operatives and credit unions fit in to the picture. A woman from credit union management spoke passionately about how the credit union gave her an opportunity when the chartered bank wouldn't. She talked about the investment standards of Ethical Funds. The manager from the local Mountain Equipment Co-operative store explained their process for screening suppliers to prevent use of sweat shops.

We explored the dilemma of people who lived in a garbage dump just outside of Bucaramanga, Colombia. Sarah and her classmates saw that from the bleakest of circumstances, people working together to form a co-operative can make a real difference in their lives.

At that point, I saw lights go on in their eyes. The frustrations and helplessness felt in the morning, were alleviated by a sense of hope, optimism, and perhaps relief that there really are sustainable solutions. Educators call this as an "Ah-hah!" moment.

Most likely, these students still do not understand the mechanics of developing co-operatives overseas, or the importance of building the human resource capacity of those in developing countries, or the critical nature of partnerships to ensure success. But they have

moved past a critical hurdle.

They have grappled openly with their perceptions of poverty and the emotional struggles those perceptions create. They have done so to the point at which they were able to see that co-operatives and credit unions can make a real difference in developing countries.

So it was that Sarah gave me my own "Ah-hah" experience. Time and time again, I am in circumstances in which I sense a co-operative or credit union member's discomfort with the issue of overseas co-operative development. And in my "logical" fashion I try to persuade them of the merits of such development. Frequently I find myself preaching to the converted while the skeptic politely slips away.

I learned from Sarah that what stands in the way of seeing the value of overseas development are preconceived notions about poverty, be it at home or abroad. A critical examination of those perceptions quickly peels away some obvious fallacies. That, in turn, opens the door to dealing with the uncomfortable questions we are left with.

As in all educational processes, we must start where the learner is: "There's a man at the door..."

Richard Stringham is Canadian Co-operative Association's development education co-ordinator in Alberta. This article originally appeared in the CCA Digest. To learn more about CCA's international development program and about development education activities in your region check their web site: www.coopcca.com.

My Opinion does not necessarily represent the editorial views of Briarpatch. We welcome submissions and encourage any ensuing dialogue.

TAX TRUTH #10

**Unbridled free markets,
free from the restraints of taxation or regulation,
may sound great in economics text books,
and in the propaganda issued by
big business lobby groups.**

**In the real world,
where people rely on public programs
that contribute to our economic growth
and prosperity,
that's just not the way things work.**

Larry Brown

Secretary Treasurer, National Union of Public and General Workers

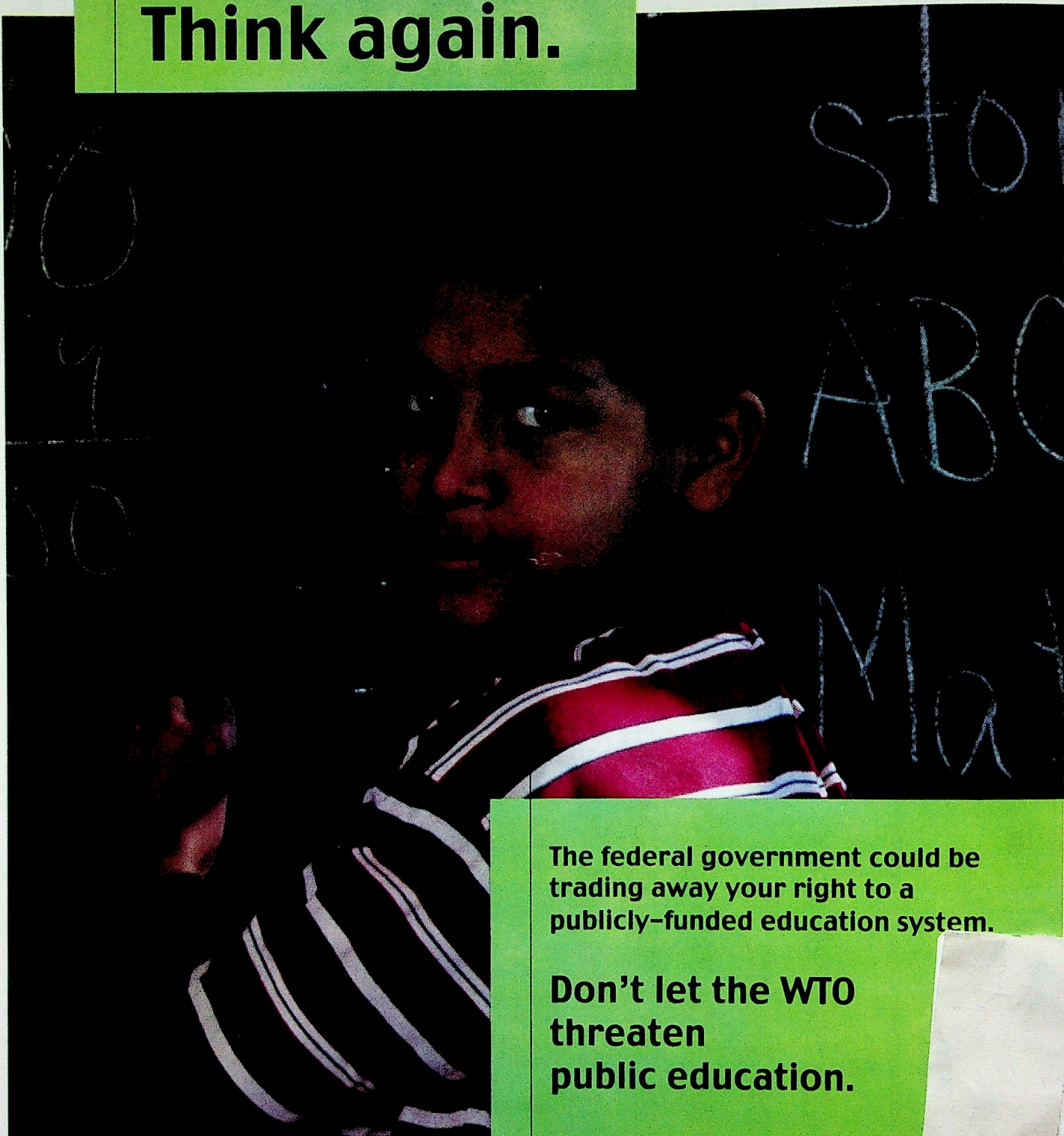
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